

can McDonald got through with him. I too, wanted to take him to task for his reactionary policy and for his untruthful charges against Comrades Debs and Berger and myself, but Frank Hayes, who presided, came to his rescue by entertaining a motion to "close debate." Gompers excused himself, saying he had to go to New York immediately for an important conference, but he was still in Indianapolis the following day.

I never knew how helpless Gompers is when not surrounded by his retainers. The miners know him, and his methods, employed in the A. F. of L., failed in the Miners' Convention.

The reader may wonder how he is able to dominate the American Federation of Labor. To those who are familiar with the workings of that organization, it is perfectly simple.

First of all, let me point out that there is absolutely no democracy in an A. F. of L. convention or in the organization as such. Whatever democracy prevails, is in some of the affiliated unions.

Time and again the Socialists have tried to change the constitution and elect officers by a referendum vote. This change has always been opposed by Gompers and his immediate associates. In the convention, all committees are made up by Gompers, and if one will examine the records, it will be found that invariably the same men are appointed year after year. The convention is made up largely of officials, most of whom expect some favors from Gompers.

I was the only delegate who went on record against Gompers for president at the 'Frisco Convention. When we adjourned, an official of a small union said to me: "I wish I could do as you did. I hate him just as much as you do, for I know he is a millstone on the labor movement. But if I show any opposition to him, he will send his organizers in and tear my union to pieces. In order to save my union, I have to be a hypocrite."

This is true of others at the head of unions, who apparently support him. With these and the element that is in harmony with his policy, one can readily see how he retains his control over the Federation. In addition to this he has a force of retainers that are carried on the payroll as "organizers." The

chief burden of their efforts is to organize the line up for Gompers rather than the American Federation of Labor.

I am often asked whether I entertain hopes of ever making the A. F. of L. a real labor organization. Yes, I do. But it will not be done at a convention. It will be done by the enlightenment of the rank and file. When the members understand to what misuse the Federation is put, and how the opportunities to make it a valuable weapon for the workers are neglected, a change will take place.

The wartime burdens levied upon labor are causing the rank and file to think. The sealing of lips, the shackling of hands and feet by wartime agreements entered into by officials of the Gompers type, will bring about new thoughts and along with the economic reconstruction after the war, there will also be a reconstruction in the labor movement. If the old "leaders" do not move forward, the enlightened rank and file will brush them aside and get others, with views in harmony with the times, to take their places. We will have not only a more solidified economic movement, but with it we will have a close relation between economic and political movements of the workers. It will not come because of the Gompers variety of labor officials, but in spite of them.