

THE A. F. OF L. CONVENTION

The one phase of the recent A. F. of L. convention worthy of particular remark was the increased strength and militancy of the Socialist minority. A year ago at the Atlanta convention the Socialists controlled but 2,800 votes, and timidly (or diplomatically) made formal declaration to the convention that they were not trying to capture the A. F. of L. This year they polled some 6,000 votes against their opponents' 12,000, boldly ran a candidate against Gompers, and let it be distinctly understood that they are out to capture the A. F. of L. Should their strength increase as much in the coming year as it did in the past one, they will be the majority faction in the A. F. of L. at its next convention.

Gompers, who a year ago defied the Socialist "borers from within," now practically concedes an approaching victory to them when he wails that "when" (not "if") the A. F. of L. changes it will find him unchanged. He specifically denies that he will swing to the Socialists "step by step" if given a chance. He is going to go down fighting, and he seems to consider the going down fighting process a certainty. He is beginning to recognize the patent fact that the days of "pure and simple" trade unionism are numbered.

The seizure of the A. F. of L. by the Socialists will be an event of pre-eminent importance to the labor movement. Whether or not it will be greatly beneficial will be largely determined by the attitude of the rebel direct actionists. If they pursue their customary attitude of hostility or indifference to the A. F. of L., the change of control will only produce a fraction of the good results (and a multiplication of the bad results), as though the direct actionists made a vigorous effort to make their influence felt. But, at any rate, regardless of the attitude of the direct actionists, undoubtedly enough improvements (or should one say changes?) will be made (such, for instance, as the abolition of the harmony of interest dogma, substitution of class ideals for craft ideals, the breaking away from the influence of the Civic Federation and the Catholic Church, the reduction of prohibitory initiation fees, broadening of the scope of the unions so as to take in the unskilled, etc., etc.), as will prevent the realization of the orthodox direct actionist plan of breaking up the A. F. of L. and substituting the I. W. W. for it.

Another obstacle to the realization of this latter plan is that the Socialists, once in control of the A. F. of L., will turn their attention to capturing the I. W. W. if it merits the trouble. After capturing the so-called "impregnable" A. F. of L., the Socialists should have no difficulty in capturing a fluid organization like the I. W. W. This should be the easier, as already a large minority—if not the majority—of the I. W. W.'s membership are Socialists. With the Socialists in control of both the A. F. of L. and the I. W. W., what would the direct actionists do? Start "boring from within" or go and start another dual organization?

It is worthy of remark that while the Socialists controlled one-third of the votes at the convention, the rebel direct actionists were altogether without representation. Although a numerous minority in the labor movement, they hadn't a single representative or spokesman in this convention representing almost 2,000,000 organized working men. It seems to the writer that this state of affairs testifies to the better generalship of the Socialists. As soon as they perceived their mistake in founding the I. W. W. (as originally pointed out by Max Hayes), the bulk of them gradually quit it under one pretext or another and devoted themselves to the A. F. of L. The I. W. W. meanwhile went on knocking the abuses afflicting the A. F. of L. and creating a considerable sentiment in its ranks for industrial unionism. Being a dual organization, it has been unable to exploit this to any great extent. The Socialists, on the other hand, being on the inside and without competition from the direct actionists, have organized the discontent created by the latter. It helped materially to swell their vote at Rochester. Are the direct actionists running a charity

propaganda bazaar? Is it their calling to thus pull chestnuts out of the fire for the Socialists?

It's high time that these foolish tactics cease and that the direct actionists take active part in the A. F. of L. The next few years, while the old craft union machines are breaking up and the new Socialist machines are being formed, will present a golden opportunity for the direct actionists to secure a foothold in the unions if they only "get busy." If, on the contrary, the present policy is pursued and the Socialists allowed a free rein, the direct actionists' task will be a much more difficult one. The Socialists will build up machines, beside which those now in existence will pale into insignificance. Now is the time for the direct actionists to line up against their great enemies of the future—the Socialists. It's idle to suppose they can escape the fight by trying to build a new labor movement that will be free from them.

WM. Z. FOSTER.

SOME LIVE WIRES.

The following circular letter explains itself. Go, thou, and do likewise:

"Dear Sir and Brother:—At the convention of the International Molders' Union of North America, just closed in Milwaukee, there was one thing that stood out prominently above all things, and that was this—that a large number of delegates advocated and fought for all legislation of an advanced nature and practically voted as a unit. The result was that the progressive element met and formed an organization, which was named 'The International Foundry Workers' Educational League.' It was agreed that the formation of this league should be for educational purposes only, and local leagues will be formed in every city throughout the country. There will be no initiation fee, but a voluntary contribution will be accepted, if offered, and the dues will be 25c a month.

"A small monthly paper will be published from the international headquarters, which will advocate such measures as the referendum, industrial form of unionism, point out the inconsistencies of the National Civic Federation, publish live, interesting shop news from every section of the country dealing with every phase of the foundry, from the handy man right down to the female core maker, and try to inject a greater fighting spirit into the molders, or, in other words, stand first, last and always for militant unionism. There will be no salaried positions in the league, all work being done voluntarily. (Then follows list of officers.) A local is now being formed in this city, and having been informed that you are one of the progressive members of the I. M. U. of N. A., we extend an invitation to you to join with us now and become one of its members. Think it over and then act by filling out the blank below.

"Yours fraternally,

"FRANK L. BECKER.

"2335 N. Sacramento Ave., Chicago, Ill."

SPECIAL NOTICE.

Those leagues that have not already done so are urged to take action upon the proposed national constitution that has been submitted to them. It is high time that we perfect our temporary national organization and proceed to the regular election of officers, etc.

As the adoption of a national constitution is of prime importance to us, I hope this matter will be given special attention.

WILLIAM Z. FOSTER,
Secretary S. L. of N. A.

SUBSCRIBE FOR THE SYNDICALIST