

Two Kinds of Attack

By Earl R. Browder

MR. GOMPERS and the employers of labor are agreed in being violently opposed to the Trade Union Educational League. Both profess to see in the amalgamation of the weak craft unions into powerful industrial unions, a threatened "destruction of civilization." Each is afraid for the labor movement to obtain more power. Attack from these two sources are instanced in February, by Mr. Gompers in the *American Federationist*, and by a series of articles in the *Journal of Commerce*, a capitalist daily of Chicago. Fear of the League and its success is the moving spirit behind the articles in both publications; only the method of attack varies. Gompers boldly whistles to keep up his spirits; while the *Journal of Commerce* solemnly sounds a warning to the employing class.

As text for his bombardment Mr. Gompers takes the National Railroad Amalgamation Conference of December 9th. He says it was a "dismal failure." So important does he think this point that he uses three and a half pages of the magazine in an effort to prove it. He rakes up also, for good measure, the old chestnuts about the Knights of Labor, the I. W. W. and other dualist efforts, which, like "the flowers that bloom in the spring, tra la, have nothing to do with the case" of amalgamation.

"Change and progress" in the A. F. of L., according to the ancient Mr. Gompers, are evidenced by the federation idea. The partial early success of federation, achieved in spite of his desperate opposition, and its breakdown under the "open shop" drive, are ignored. Federation a la Gompers, that is the solution to our ailments. Amalgamation is but a devilish scheme, disturbing the even tenor of official life, insidiously designed to establish Lenin as head of the trade unions. In fact, if hard names could stop the amalgamation movement, the February issue of the *American Federationist* would have destroyed the Trade Union Educational League.

As for the National Railroad Amalgamation Conference, the one thing needed to complete its success has now been added unto it. That is Mr. Gompers official denunciation. We will accept his three-and-one-half page attack as sufficient proof of substantial achievement for the Conference. Gompers wanted it to be nothing, therefore he sees it as nothing—but nevertheless worthy of 2,500 words of attack. His opposition is welcomed. His maledictions falleth like the gentle dew upon the amalgamation movement.

Such attacks perform a two-fold service. Be-

side affording a measure of the effectiveness of the movement, they also place the reactionary bureaucracy directly in opposition to the most pressing immediate need of the workers. As a result the rank and file, awaking to this need, also realize the necessity of dethroning their petty Kaisers; they are demanding amalgamation, and when their demand registers hard enough the Gompers machine is going to crack.

But if Gompers professes to see "failure" written on the amalgamation movement, not so the employers. In a series of articles syndicated widely through the daily press, the *Journal of Commerce* says: "It is on the cards that industrial unionism is to supplant business unionism." Speaking of the railroad amalgamation movement, it says: "It was the fact that only seven of the 16 rail organizations were on strike, while nine other crafts remained at work, that gave such an impetus to the amalgamation movement. Organized industry, as represented in the transportation companies, saved the day by reason of this split, but organized labor learned a lesson." This is plain speaking, and quite a contrast to the drivel of the *American Federationist*.

The explanation of the frankness of the employers' paper is, that the *Journal of Commerce* circulates almost entirely in business and middle-class circles. They speak clearly because they speak to their own class and in its interests. Mr. Gompers, in contrast, must turn and twist, evading every vital issue, because his opposition to amalgamation is in the interests not of the workers to whom he speaks but of the capitalists.

The amalgamation movement can accept both kinds of attack in good spirit. The alarm exhibited in all circles of reactionaries and conservatives, among which the Gompersian bureaucrats find themselves in company with the employing class, is the final proof that the labor movement is stirred to its depths. Amalgamation, solidarity; industrial unionism, militant leadership—these are the things that the American trade union movement wants and is determined to have. The future belongs to those who are attacked because of these demands.

While the rank and file press onward to their goal, we pause a moment to drop a bit of advice to Samuel Gompers. When the next Amalgamation Conference is called, he should set aside in the *American Federationist*, instead of the three and one half pages now deemed necessary, at least twelve pages to prove that it did not amount to anything. He will need that much or more.