The League Under Fire

By Earl R. Browder

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The League of Labor, especially, has reverberated throughout the labor movement of America. The national convention of the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks, just closed at Dallas, Texas, adopted a resolution for amalgamating the railroad unions into one industrial union, and also passed the Chicago resolution favoring amalgamation of all craft unions upon lines of industry. In the convention of the Railway Employees' Department, described in detail elsewhere in this issue, there was a powerful sentiment for this measure, which was only headed-off by most ardent efforts.

The facts are that Gompers' influence in the labor movement has been to stabilize and stop all progress. Such a condition is the reason why the League, boldly proclaiming a program of unifying our unions for effective action, calling for militant leadership, and affiliation with the International of working-class solidarity, the Red Trade Union International, has been given so enthusiastic a welcome. It is the first sign of real life in the labor movement, and as such it rallies those in whose hearts hope still springs.

It is not a violation of confidence to say that one of Gompers' principal sources of worry is the knowledge of the many high international officials in the unions are sympathetic to the League, and are quietly supporting its program. Hardly a week passes without several of these men, from various sections, dropping into the office of the League to wish it success and pass a word of encouragement. They want to see some constructive work done, and they know that such cannot be accomplished in words, where direct charges whose absolutism he well knows, might lay him open. By skilful juggling of words he manages, without saying so directly, to make the charge that the League is being financed by "Bolshevist Gold." The invitation extended to him in Chicago, to inspect the books of the League, is carefully ignored.

Why Reactionary Leaders Shudder

The League, unswerved by this unprecedented campaign, is very simple. It is, that the League has received a tremendous response from the labor movement. The amalgamation and other most important points in the program of the League, has taken on great headway, and is sweeping through the unions. It has been adopted by dozens of central labor bodies, and by hundreds of local unions. The resolution adopted by the Chicago Federation of Labor, as well as Gompers' pocketpiece, Matthew Woll, is sent to make a slanderous charge against the League. Nearly every International journal has obediently taken a shot in the same direction within the past month, with a few honorable exceptions. The natural culmination of this campaign is very simple. It is, that the League under fire.

The Merits of the Argument

We have grown accustomed to have our regular "May Day Scare" thrown into us each year by A. Mitchell Palmer and similar "Department of Justice" officials. Accompanying the warning of "revolution" and bombings, it became the regular procedure to announce a devious plot financed by the ungodly Bolsheviks and with the direct assistance of the capitalists, and to order everyone to take action and comment upon its fulminations. Gompers himself, and a flock of his "organizers," have been going from place to place, denouncing the League and organizing the opposition against it. But his only weapons are still, as they have been from the beginning, slander, prejudice, vilification, and untruth.

Strangely enough to those who do not know the latest document in the trade unions, all of these spectacles, witch-burning orgies of Mr. Gompers, so far from hampering the work of the League, have proved the most decided stimulant to its great undeterred movement. By failures, and discouraged by the reactionary official character of their unionists, many militants had failed to become active to the call sent out by the Trade Union League which was organized.

These former militants had last hope, and looked upon the League as another foolish crusade, doomed to futility. It was the demonstration to the future carries them to industrial unionism, to the discarding of fossilies like Gompers, to affiliation to the Red Trade Union International, which are not afraid of these things or their names.

The time has passed when the scare-crow of Bolshevism and the logician of revolution, manipulated by the hands of Gompers and Palmer, will longer block the road to better organization and more working-class power. The program of the Trade Union Educational League has pointed the way along the road to improve the unions are beginning to see the way, and now that they have started it will take more words to stop them.