

The League Under Fire

By Earl R. Browder

NINE pages of inflammatory denunciation in the *American Federationist!* This is the new high point in the campaign against the Trade Union Educational League, the beginning of which was reported last month in THE LABOR HERALD. In the May issue of his house-organ, Gompers runs a long screed of slander and vilification, continuing the attack he started in his April issue and on his trip to Chicago, Cleveland, and other cities. "Organizers" are busily carrying on against the League all over the country; Gompers' pocketpiece, Matthew Woll, is sent to make a slanderous attack at the Convention of the Railway Employees' Department; and General Presidents of unions all over the country are taking up cudgels 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 comes with Gompers' resort to the capitalist press in his flamboyant May 1st manifesto.

In a hysterical fear of everything which even smells of progressive and militant action by the working class, Gompers is hurling charges recklessly right and left. He is flatly and positively against real labor solidarity, and denounces its advocates as "disruptors." What are his arguments? Does he attempt to prove his charges? Not at all. He is content to damn the League as a "secret" organization intent upon destroying the unions (one version), or to deliver them up to Lenin (second version—take your choice). Gompers' panic, however, does not prevent him from extreme care in choice of words, where direct charges whose absurdity 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 "Bolshevik Gold." The invitation extended to him in Chicago, to inspect the books of the League, is carefully ignored.

Why Reactionary Leaders Shudder

The reason for the panic, witnessed by this unprecedented campaign, is very simple. It is, that the League has received a tremendous response from the labor movement. The amalgamation movement, one of the 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 Federa-

tion 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 strenuous efforts.

The facts are that Gompers' influence in the labor movement has been to stultify and stop all progress. Such a condition is the reason why the League, boldly proclaiming a program of uniting 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 that a surprisingly large number of 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 the old machine offers no hope. The reactionary officials have a keen sense for this atmosphere of wholesale "disloyalty" to their rule; they do not know how to meet it. So, with Gompers at the head, they launch a mock reign of terror. They do not realize that these very tactics are forcing many union men into the ranks of the League who would not otherwise go the whole way upon the League program. Today Gompers is forcing the issue,—“Gompers and standpatism” or “The League and progress.” All of which is the best possible testimonial to the correctness of the League's position and the effectiveness of its work.

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 warn-



ings of "revolution" and bombings, it became the regular procedure to announce a devious plot financed by the unholy Bolsheviks and their everlasting gold supply. The game was playing out, however, and in the year of grace, 1922, the capitalist politicians evidently considered that it was too stale for further use.

Not so Sam Gompers. With a sprightliness surprising in one so old he springs to the vacated place of A. Mitch. Palmer and dons his discarded mantle. The columns of the great capitalist press of the big cities open wide, and with screaming 8 column headlines the manifesto of Gompers to a waiting world is brought forth. Under the blazing heads is carried two columns of such nonsense that even the capitalist papers have been unable to refrain from joking about it. Gompers' charge against the League is in the form of innuendo, and reads as follows:

"W. Z. Foster, who had no money, went to Moscow and came back and announced that he was building a great secret machine to undermine the American labor movement and turn it over to the Red International, owned by Lenin. He began publication of an expensive magazine and proclaimed a thousand secret agents in a thousand communities."

Disregarding the direct lies contained in this paragraph, which are apparent to any reader and which were dealt with in the last issue of THE LABOR HERALD, we will deal only with the indirect statement that the League is financed by Bro. Lenin of Russia. We have already pointed out that Gompers was offered the opportunity, while in Chicago, to examine the books of the organization, but he refused to do so. In the face of this, the repetition of such a stale and mouldy charge is distinctly in bad faith. The League demands that he produce proof of his assertions, or cease his slander.

Mr. Gompers, in all his decades of opposition to everything smacking of progressive or radical tendencies, has never before displayed so much bitterness or attacked anything so viciously, as he is now attacking the Trade Union Educational League. Not content with the use of most of the conservative trade union journals, he needs must turn to the capitalistic dailies. The latter, significantly enough, gladly give him all the space

he can use, and from coast to coast they eagerly print and comment upon his 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 latent discontent in the trade unions, all of these spectacular, witch-burning orgies of Mr. Gompers, so far from hampering the work of the League, have proved the most decided stimulant to its work. Dulled by past failures, and discouraged by the reactionary official character of their unions, many militants had failed to awaken to the call sent out by the Trade Union Educational League when it was organized. These former livewires had lost hope, and looked upon the League as another forlorn cause, doomed to futility. It took the demonstration of reactionary officialdom in a panic of fear to convince them that progress is not only possible, but waiting to be called forth to transform our labor movement into a living, growing power.

Samuel Gompers can no longer hold back the tides of progress by empty words. The workers are getting ready to go forward, and cannot be much longer fooled. If the pathway to the future carries them to industrial unionism, to the discarding of fossils like Gompers, to affiliation to the Red Trade Union International, they are not afraid of these things or their names. The time has passed when the scare-crow of Bolshevism and the bogie-man of revolution, manipulated by the hands of Gompers or of Palmer, can 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 this road, the masses in the unions are beginning to see the way, and now that they have started it will take more than words to stop them.