

SAMUEL GOMPERS.

What Veterans in the Labor Movement Think of Him.

Of course, the re-election of Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor, was a "well-deserved compliment" to that gentleman. But that stereotyped form of expressing gratification at the event does not give adequate voice to the Journal's sentiments in the matter. To say that the election of President Gompers was a "well-deserved compliment" to the Federation and the labor movement is to state the case with better regard for the significance of things.

In point of intelligence, the personnel of the Federation's annual conventions will compare favorably with that of any assemblage in the land. The fact that each convention for many years past has indorsed the action of its predecessors in their choice of officers, by re-electing them, is an evidence that the members of the executive council measure up to the highest standard of capacity among the delegates, plus the experience afforded by the opportunities of their office. This much said and suggested with reference to the colleagues of President Gompers, there remains much to be said concerning Gompers himself, most, if not all, of which the members of the executive council and others best qualified to speak from personal knowledge will doubtless attest.

Simple candor compels the acknowledgment that in Samuel Gompers the American Federation of Labor and the labor movement of the world at large possesses a leader of richest intellectual endowment, of profoundest moral convictions, and of devotion without reserve or consideration. Applied to almost any other contemporary character of whom the Journal has knowledge, either personal or general, these terms would be regarded as extravagant; applied to Gompers, these terms imply nothing more than is warranted by truth and demanded by justice. This paper has closely followed the actions of President Gompers during the 16 years of its existence, always with a keen interest in his conduct, frequently with the special interests of the seamen in view. Throughout this entire period the Journal has found the president of the American Federation of Labor unwavering in his sense of duty, untiring in the discharge of the tasks imposed upon, or anticipated by, him. In each of the many crises that have occurred during his incumbency President Gompers has risen superior to the needs of the occasion. By clear and comprehensive mental grasp, by calm and courageous exposition, he has conserved, strengthened and dignified the position of organized labor. In each of these emergencies other men have essayed to guide the destinies of organized labor, and, having made their play to passion, prejudice or false sentiment, have passed into obscurity. Gompers alone, of all men who have assumed the leadership of labor in the past twenty years or more, still stands in front. In each time of trial Gompers has proved himself the "man of the hour," rising into commanding eminence and enlarging the potency of his counsel in proportion to the pressure of the difficulties surrounding organized labor.

Today, in the face of a crisis which promises to dwarf all events of the past, Samuel Gompers stands well in front, indisputably one of the world's greatest men, and easily the leader of America's moral forces. The rule that monuments should not be erected nor biographies written until the objects of them are in their graves is

a good one. But proper respect for that rule does not work an injunction against organized labor and its friends in the matter of expressing appreciation of the rare good fortune that has blessed them with a counsellor and servant whose voice will be heard and heeded above the disputations in the camp of friend or foe. —Coast Seamen's Journal.

LABOR ABOVE ALL.

Extracts From an Address by Prof. A. W. Small.

Prof. Small, of the Chicago University, takes the position that producers have moral rights and capital simply legal rights. He says:

"The only thing that deserves financial reward is labor. Capital, as such, deserves none. The political economists' long standing theory concerning the productivity of capital has been the basis for an unlimited number of fallacies in social thinking and adjusting.

"The only just basis for reward is production. Capital is only a machine that helps labor in producing. The present legal right that capital enjoys is all wrong. Capital has this legal right simply because our statutes give the right. There is nothing morally right about it.

"The payment of reward to capital is not an individual right. The capitalist does not get a reward because he has a right to it, but because society considers it a social convenience.

"Reward for labor is a personal right and not a contract right. Not until this principle is accepted will there be a just basis for reward. The idle capitalist is not a producer, no matter what the receipts on his bonds amount to. The money is only a means to an end. Money will buy mills to help labor, but it is not the mill that produces it—it is labor.

"At the present society is willing to let the owners of capital, like those who inherit it, loaf around.

"These loafers may be put into two classes, viz., those that do not work at all, but live on the interest of their money, and those that do some work to advance their enterprises bought by inherited wealth.

"The time will come when the idlers will get no reward and the semi-idlers will only get reward for what they do. The public will rule that the only incomes that are just are wages earned or salaries of public officers.

"New laws, based on moral rights, should determine property privileges. This would establish a property right for labor, just as capital has a legal right today.

"There is nothing right in the law that permits an enormous amount of capital to be organized into a corporation, then to be protected by legal rights, which, when they are applied to an individual, can be called nothing but moral rights, or the common right to work for a living.

"There is no equality where one man with a million of inherited capital can determine the weal of a thousand of his fellowmen. The personal element must control and not the money's worth.

"The non-producer should not be entitled to one cent. Either man who

does work should be entitled to what he earns. If his wage is a moderate one and his ability to produce enormous it is not just to say that his wage shall be determined by the man with the capital back of him instead of his real personal worth. So long as capital determines the wage it will be an unjust wage.

"This is not a socialistic theory, for I believe in individual worth and that the individual should be rewarded to the extent of his ability to produce.

"The sort of justice that gives the same income to a man who never works as to the laborer who toils for his wages is a very questionable sort of justice.

"Our ideas concerning the distribution of wealth must be revised or we must regulate the power and the worth of this wealth. Ability to produce must become the real test of merit, legally as well as morally.

"First must come a radical change in our ideas concerning property rights, then the other will speedily follow."

Only an Apprentice.

As much for its rarity as its intrinsic merit, says the Typographical Journal, the following leading editorial on the death of one of its composing room employees is reproduced from a recent issue of the Indianapolis (Ind.) Star:

"Only an apprentice he was, 'the devil,' in the parlance of the place where he worked; yet when his death became known, there was an impressive lull in the place that had known him, and not a few of those with whom he had worked brushed a tear aside.

"One doesn't have to be great to be missed. Were a stately building to be razed, we would pass the place where it stood and remark on the changed appearance. And yet we

would miss that building no more than we would the loss of some little, even trivial, possession that brought comfort to us.

"George Reed was only a boy, and office 'devil,' yet there are men in the Star composing room, some of them gray, who will not hear George Reed's laugh again, and, not hearing it, will wonder why he had to be taken away. Just a boy learning a trade. A boy with a sunny disposition, a good heart and a ready hand. A boy that warmed his way into the hearts of his fellows, a boy who did what he had to do faithfully and well.

"He will be missed, and maybe, after all, he was great."

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