

"I'M FOR AMERICA FIRST," DECLARES "SAM" GOMPERS

President of Labor Federation Interviewed During Visit Here

"WITH THE PRESIDENT"

Declares Wilson's Neutrality Is Real—Workman's Outlook Bright

The neutrality of the United States, the conditions which will confront the workman after the war and what would happen if Congress listened to the plea of "peace" advocates who insist upon stopping the shipment of munitions of war to the belligerent nations, were discussed by Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor, in a 15-minute interview in the Hotel Walton before he left for Washington.

Mr. Gompers conferred with several labor leaders yesterday with respect to organization matters and labor legislation. The conference was similar to that held with labor leaders in New York city Monday. Mr. Gompers consented to talk a few moments before going into the labor conference.

"I must have a cigar first," he said, going to the cigar stand in the hotel. "We can talk better."

Mr. Gompers asked for his favorite brand of cigar and was advised that it was not in stock. "Let me have an imported cigar of some kind," he said. The clerk handed over a box of very dark-looking Havana and announced that they were the best in stock, price \$1 each.

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Gompers. "A workingman can't afford anything like that. Haven't you one for a quarter?" The clerk presented another box, a clear one, which Mr. Gompers, with a "That's better," led the way to the writing room for the interview.

"Now fire away," he invited as he settled back in his chair and blew a cloud of smoke toward the ceiling.

REFUSES TO DISCLOSE DISCLOSURES

"Do the recent passport frauds and explosions, attributed to sympathy with belligerent nations, have anything to do with your visit here?" he was asked.

"Most assuredly not," was the prompt reply. "I have nothing to do with the State and Treasury Departments' matters. I am not seeking any diplomatic information nor have I any that is not already known. I would not care to go into these disclosures, for they are most unhappy incidents, and what I might say would not materially aid the Government's investigation."

"It is only natural that certain people should be in sympathy with their mother countries, but I am for America and American workmen, and believe that our neutrality should be preserved for the dignity and respect of other nations as well as for ourselves. Only recently a man asked me what side I was on. I told him the side of the United States. He insisted that I must have sympathies on either side, and that he himself favored Germany."

"I replied again that I was for America. My people came from Europe, I admit, but what of that? I live here, my sons and daughters live here, my father lives here and my brothers and sisters are here. We are all citizens of the United States; we get our bread and butter in the United States, we vote here and enjoy many liberties. Then why should we take sides against our own country?"

U. S. DOES NOT FAVOR ALLIES

"Unfortunately, from the present conditions it would appear as though the United States favors the Allies. This is not true. We are shipping to England and France and other countries, and we would ship to Germany, too, if it were possible. That's where the trouble lies. Germany does not have the ships

England has and cannot get to the United States to carry away our exports. If she could, you can rest assured the German liners would be plying back and forth just as any other vessels. Then, too, Germany doesn't want to let her goods out of Germany unless we bring in ours, which is likewise impossible, and so the agitation pro and con goes on."

Mr. Gompers said that on several occasions he had been asked to favor the proposition to prevent the exportation of war munitions to England, France and Russia. "Why, that's madness," he said. "It's preposterous, impossible."

"What do you mean by the term 'war munitions'?" I asked one of these inquirers. "Do you mean gunpowder? Do you mean cannon? Or do you mean everything that is necessary to the conduct of war?" The soldiers in the trenches have to have shoes, they have to have clothes, hats, gloves and other personal equipment. Meats and bread-stuffs are necessary to their sustenance, automobiles for their conveyance, dredges for digging trenches, lumber for holding back the embankments, coal, oil and other substances for warmth or motive power. Now, if you stop the shipment of gunpowder, why don't you stop the shipment of all these things?"

ALL TRADE WOULD CEASE

"Suppose you would do that. Trade would come to a standstill and the workmen would suffer. Why, it's madness, a commercial impossibility. Under such conditions each nation would become dependent upon itself and be a walled arsenal, completely shut off from the outside world. Such a condition could not exist."

"I agree with President Wilson in his present neutrality stand. Respecting the rights of all other nations, we must insist upon the respect and the rights due our own country and people."

Asked what effect the war if brought to a sudden close would have upon the workmen of the United States, Mr. Gompers said:

"Labor naturally will suffer somewhat at the close of the war, for when war orders cease the munition plants will be compelled to discharge or lay off hundreds of workmen. Many of the men will have to seek new lines of trade, others will go back to trades they left to go into these factories, and while the readjustment is taking place there will be hard times. But the American workman usually looks to the future and will be prepared to meet these conditions, and when the change has been effected prosperity will reign as never before."

"But I must be hurrying along to that meeting now," Mr. Gompers concluded, rising from the chair and relinquishing the cigar, which had gone out. "Remember that I'm with the President on this neutrality business and am for America and American workmen first."

E. A. GIMBEL RENOMINATED

Will Again Run for Country Club—Election Tonight

Ellis A. Gimbel has been nominated for re-election to the presidency of the Philadelphia Country Club, the tenth annual meeting and election of which organization will be held tonight at the club house. At the meeting the president's report will be submitted to the members. Other candidates nominated are:

Vice president, D. J. Wasserman.

Secretary, Charles Edwin Fox.

Treasurer, Ely K. Selig.

Directors for three years, Charles Gimbel, Milton Herold, Joseph Snellenburg, Edward Wolf, Benjamin Wolf and Henry Strouse.

LOAN DEADLOCK CONTINUES AFTER A WEEK OF DELAY

"Legal Objections" Hold Up \$95,000,000 for City Improvements

ACCUSE SOLICITOR RYAN

The deadlock over the \$95,000,000 loan continues, and no loan legislation is expected in Councils tomorrow. After a week of conferences the members of the sub-committee of Council's Finance Committee have made no headway in clearing up the "legal objections" to the legislation, and plans for any immediate improvement are again upset.

It has been charged openly that politics has played a big part in holding up the loan bill and that factional troubles within the Republican organization are the direct or indirect cause of the delay. This, in part, is denied by members of the Finance Committee, who claim that City Solicitor Ryan is "blocking" any loan legislation at this time.

The City Solicitor repeatedly has refused to comment on the controversy for publication, but John P. Connelly, chairman of the Finance Committee, which recommended the loan, and who will succeed Mr. Ryan next year, has not been so reticent. Mr. Connelly, during the many days of conference since the meeting of Councils last Thursday, has insisted that the loan bill as framed complied with all the requirements of the law or could easily be made to do so. Mr. Connelly and other members of the Finance Committee put the legal questions squarely up to the City Solicitor, and without his approval the loan bill likely will lie over until the first of next year at least. In this event it will not be possible to hold the special election in February, when it was planned to present the largest loan in the history of the city to the voters.

SMITH TOLD OF BILL'S FATE

Mayor-elect Smith has been informed of the possible fate of the loan bill, and a number of conferences were held today in the hope of whipping the loan legislation into such shape that it would pass the critical eye of City Solicitor Ryan, who will have to lend it his approval if anything is to be done this year. The members of the new Cabinet are holding and will continue to hold conferences with Chairman Connelly, and it is as-

sumed that these conferences may lead to the drafting of a bill which will meet all legal requirements and yet to a greater or lesser degree supply the demands of the departments for new municipal projects in 1916.

In the absence of any loan legislation, the most important financial items that will come up in Councils tomorrow will be the appropriation bills for the more important departments of the city government. These, it is understood, will be cut down very materially before being reported out of the Finance Committee tomorrow.

The appropriation bills for the smaller departments of the city government were all approved and reported out by the committee, and the remaining bills will be reported tomorrow. The big bills to be reported are those for the Departments of Public Safety, Public Works and Department of Supplies. Director Dripps, of Public Safety, has asked for \$3,342,527.82, as compared with the \$1,432,522.39 allowed the department this year. Director Cook, of the Department of Public Works, has asked for \$5,077,153.68, as compared with the \$5,543,481.67 allowed him this year, and Director Loeb wants \$1,145,000, as compared with the \$1,208,220 used by the Department of Supplies during the 12 months of this year.

WRITING OF LETTERS BENEFIT TO CONVICTS

Woman Prison Reformer Coming Here to Urge Extension of Privileges

Mrs. Ella Dann Moore, of Washington, is in this city today to inspect the Eastern Penitentiary. For many years Mrs. Moore has been quietly and unofficially carrying on a great beneficial work in behalf of prison and prison reform, spending all of her spare time and much of her earnings to bring a little sunshine and cheerfulness to those behind the prison walls.

Mrs. Moore is chiefly interested in securing more liberal mail privileges for the prisoners so that they may keep in touch with their families and friends and not become "hardened criminals," ready

to break the law as soon as they are freed from serving their sentences.

"In many of the prisons of the East," Mrs. Moore said, "the prisoners are only allowed to write one letter a month. Think of it: one letter a month! How can you expect to have prison reform if the prisoners are denied contact with the outside world through correspondence?"

"Were the prisoners allowed to write as often as they please to family and friends on the outside, reform would be more readily accomplished. The liberty of daily letters is now granted in most progressive institutions, notably in the western States and the results have been unflinching and satisfactory. Nothing has a more uplifting influence upon a pris-

oner than the right sort of letter from without. Nothing is more conducive to gloom and despair than lack of contact with family and friends outside, and nothing is so morally detrimental than gloom and despair."

Mrs. Moore said that she was not entirely familiar with conditions at the Eastern Penitentiary, but wanted to make an inspection of the institution before she formed any conclusions.

Australian Gets Order of Bath

LONDON, Dec. 15.—King George has conferred the Grand Cross of the Order of Bath upon Sir George Reid, the retiring high commissioner for Australia in London.

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By Joseph C. Ferguson, Jr.

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