

HISTORY AND PURPOSES OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

When on Monday, Dec. 13th, President Samuel Gompers calls the seven-teenth annual convention of the American Federation of Labor to order in the hall of representatives in the state capitol at Nashville, Tenn., there will be gathered in that hall working men and women from every state and territory in the United States...

Some Information Apropos of the Approaching Annual Convention of That Organization.

P. J. MAAS, in the Times-Herald.

Explains in good part why the federation has been steadily gaining in strength, stability and influence. The other organizations that at times have held a more prominent place in the public eye have either declined in numbers and power or gone to pieces altogether.

The American Federation of Labor does what all federations of labor unions do--attempts to give solidarity to the labor movement by getting the various sections of the labor army into touch with each other. It refuses to admit that occupation can be a barrier to the community of interest running through the wage-earning masses.

In 1885 twelve men met in Louisville, Ky., took the first step beyond trade lines in the organization of labor in America by issuing a call to all organized bodies of workmen to meet the following year in Baltimore, Md.

No further steps were taken to form a national body until Aug. 2 and 3, 1887, when they assembled at Terre Haute, Ind., a number of gentlemen representing several national and international trades unions and the central labor bodies in the larger cities of the United States...

Carpenters and Joiners on which to concentrate all efforts to secure the adoption of the eight-hour day on May 1, 1890. The movement was successful in 127 cities, and benefited 48,197 workmen of that trade; in many others also the impetus thus given secured like benefit.

For the first time in the history of the general labor movement in the United States was held in the south, the scene being Birmingham, Ala. Its influence was of vast benefit to the organization in that section of the country. At this convention it was resolved to test the constitutionality of the contract law, and the rights of the courts to issue injunctions on wage-workers charged with no offense against the law...

At the sixth convention, held in Columbus, Ohio, Dec. 4, 1886, the old federation was dissolved, a more perfect plan of organization was adopted, and the name--American Federation of Labor--was chosen.

At the eighth convention, held in St. Louis, Dec. 13, 1888, is memorable for the unanimity and enthusiasm with which the delegates fixed the date for the general inauguration of the eight-hour workday for May 1, 1890.

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The fifteenth convention met in Madison Square Garden, New York city, Dec. 9, 1895. As general trade was just recovering from the long-continued industrial depression, no general movement looking to renewed efforts on behalf of the eight-hour day was inaugurated.

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Trades Union Congress of England were present. The most important question considered was that of political action and platform, in which it was proposed to commit the federation to state socialism; this movement was defeated. The headquarters of the federation were ordered removed from New York city to Indianapolis, Ind.

The sixteenth convention met in Cincinnati, Dec. 14, 1896; 117 delegates were present. The officers reported many disagreements between employer and employe settled and victories achieved during the year.

Among the principal subjects for consideration will be: The eight-hour workday; methods for more thorough organization, the immigration question, government by injunction, defining more clearly the attitude of the trade unions in regard to political parties and political action; higher dues, the creation of a defense fund, the appointment of special organizers to assist unions already affiliated in a more thorough organization of their various crafts...

At the fourth convention held in Chicago, Oct. 7, 1884, steps were taken for active propaganda for the eight-hour day, and May 1, 1890, fixed for its general inauguration. The turbulent scenes of the first week of that month in Chicago, and the terrible consequences of the memorial and fatal meeting on the Haymarket, where a bomb was thrown from behind the red flag of anarchy, created a violent reaction in the public mind.

make their dues 50 cents per month as a minimum. The delegates presented the British delegate, Samuel Woods, with a diamond set chain, and John Mattison with a gold watch, as tokens of good fellowship and brotherly love existing between the two great federations of labor.

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