

THE PARLIAMENT OF LABOR

BY H. J. GREENWOOL

EVERY year in the Autumn there assembles in some great American or Canadian town an aggregation of four or five hundred prosperous business men. A chance visitor, attracted by the expensive cars and fleets of taxis before their convention hall, would scarcely guess that the delegates within were all members of trade unions, representing three million toilers in the annual parliament of the American Federation of Labor. Convinced by their credentials, the visitor would immediately conclude that any misgivings he may have had about the universality and cornucopiousness of the Coolidge-Hoover prosperity, or any reservations he may have entertained in the last presidential campaign as the Republican spellbinders roared inexhaustibly into the microphone, were petty and gratuitous libels on our incomparable land.

All the accessories of Americans long on the make are discernible in the persons and accoutrements of these worthy working men. At the forty-eighth annual convention of the Federation in New Orleans last November the evidences of eupepsia were unmistakable. There were the silk-threaded wool suits of custom make, the modish cravats, the perfectly polished stylish footwear, the precious stones set in ring or stickpin, the well-larded hands innocent of horn, the heads magnificently tonsored, the bellies spaciouly paunched, the multi-graphed chins, the benevolently spirituous expressions and breaths, and over all the leisurely, almost gentlemanly, air of good fellows growing congenially old together in the same comfortable club. Prosperous, but neither ritzy nor reserved.

Poor relations sometimes put in an unwelcome appearance at the annual meetings of the club, but they do not make the good committees nor do they penetrate beyond the externals of the organization. They remain on the fringe. Most of them expect sooner or later to ride in high themselves. Those who don't are angry but inarticulate. They feel as any mechanic would feel who had by chance been invited to some rather tony outfit and been made to acknowledge his betters after he got there. Each year these misfits diminish in number. The organization has developed an effective bouncing system and so tightened the rules of admission that it is now hard for anyone but the right sort to get in. How this filtering of delegates is achieved may be learned from an amendment to Section 1, Article IV, of the constitution of the Federation, adopted at Los Angeles. The amended section, as it now stands, reads:

Only those persons whose Local Unions are affiliated with Central Bodies or with State Branches and who are delegates to said Central Bodies and State Branches shall be eligible to represent City Central Bodies or State Branches in the Conventions of the American Federation of Labor.

The amendment was adopted unanimously after Chairman Daniel J. Tobin of the committee on law had stated frankly that its object was to change the old system under which "in recent years undesirables have come here as delegates."

At the same Los Angeles convention Vice-President Matthew Woll did not scruple to collaborate with the local gendarmes in putting on the list of the proscribed a duly elected delegate whose crime was that he believed the interests of capital

and labor to have nothing in common. The filthy lout was called on the carpet before Brother Woll in a private room at the Hotel Alexandria, made to confess his abominations, and told that his credentials would be *spurlos versenkt*. As he made his way to the elevator he descried Ober-leutnant Hynes, of the Los Angeles anti-Red squad, lurking in the middle distance. The documentary evidence against the culprit had been obtained by a raid made on his rooms by Hynes, and by Hynes it had been turned over to Brother Woll! There were no regrettable interlopers of that sort at the ensuing New Orleans gathering.

II

Suppose we take a look at the boys who constitute the pillars of the Federation. Quite substantial most of them are, both in figure and in income. They rank in the upper ten percent of the Treasury's income-tax groups. Their offstage conversation befits their economic plane.

"Goddam, I'm sore I sold my Standard Oil," one of them observed in the corridors of the palatial Hotel Roosevelt, which housed the convention headquarters and most of the delegates in New Orleans. He had bought an afternoon paper to follow his favorite stocks in the "Hoover market." Vice-President Jimmy Wilson (there are eight vice-presidents) is a devotee of the same indoor sport. Capaciously filling an armchair in the club-car on his way North after the convention, he asked Brother Mike Keough, president of the International Molders Union of North America, for a section of the evening journal. Mike obliged but Jimmie was not satisfied. "Gimme the curb," he said. Jimmie makes periodic speeches against the Reds and other miscreants who would undermine the sacred rights of property.

One of the best fronts is put up by William Green, president of the Federation since the death in 1924 of the gentleman now ceremonially styled by all convention speakers the Immortal Gompers.

Brother Green is neither stupid nor brilliant. He can be kept in line by the shrewder wits behind the throne and he can be trusted to handle the minor crises of the convention proceedings without botching things too much. He is a resounding speaker. Words drop sonorously from out his rosy gills. His manly breast is made to be beaten by his rhetorical fist. His eyes can flash indignation or secrete kindliness at will. His principal defect is an utter lack of humor. His soporific dignity gradually infects the whole convention.

Well over a quarter of a century ago Brother Green was a working coal-miner of Coshocton, Ohio, drawing the wretched wage of that profession. But he soon emancipated himself. Step by step he ascended the ladder of union office, from the local to the subdistrict and then to the district, and finally to international estate in the United Mine Workers. From secretary-treasurer of the miners and vice-president of the Federation he made the last jump to his present post. In the course of his long advance he has found time to serve two terms in the Ohio State Senate, where he put through a model Workman's Compensation Law. He was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1912 that nominated the ever glorious Professor Wilson for the presidency of the United States. By 1920, however, his political dignity had sunk to the level of an alternate-at-large. Though a follower of the Prince of Peace (Baptist model), he has also accepted the post of civilian aide to the Secretary of War. Like his predecessor, he proudly claims membership in the Elks. Also, the Odd Fellows are entitled to point to him as one of their most distinguished exhibits. He regards highly his membership in the American Academy of Political and Social Science.

Brother Green's assiduous labors are fittingly rewarded. He draws \$1000 a month in wages from the Federation and \$667 a month for traveling expenses. What honorariums may be added by the sundry Chambers of Commerce, Rotary Clubs, colleges,

bar associations, church societies and the like which he constantly addresses is not to be esteemed the public's business. The \$20,000 paid to his order every year by the Federation's bankers has not, however, made him forget how it feels to be a hunger-wracked coal-digger. He says as much himself. In the course of a denunciation of divers Liberals and other well meaning persons who had protested against a certain star chamber lynching, Brother Green told the convention that he and his associates on the Executive Council "are men who come from the mill, the mine and the factory. They are working men who have been trained, and in their bosoms [punching his breast] beat hearts in sympathy and in tune with the hopes and aspirations of working men and women."

Brother Green's heart has need to beat when from his \$20,000 vantage point he surveys the lot of his half million or more fellow miners. Thomas Kennedy, who holds the position in the United Mine Workers of America vacated by Brother Green on his last promotion, figures that during the past two years the union has spent close to \$10,000,000 in aid of its own destitute members. A recent issue of the *United Mine Workers' Journal* carries an official appeal for assistance to a small corner of the Indiana mine fields. It says:

There is great need for continued relief. The 1,600 men and their wives and children need everything—food, clothing, money and everything else to sustain them. They deserve full support.

Brother Kennedy himself said to the convention delegates:

When we present to you some of the actual figures with respect to the payment of relief only in needy cases, you will appreciate the enormity of the situation with respect to relief. Relief was paid only in cases of absolute necessity and yet on that basis it required as a very minimum a total of \$400,000 per month.

Ah, that every miner in the country could average in a year what Brother Green draws from the Federation in a month!

President John L. Lewis of the miners, popularly regarded as one of the two men who give Brother Green his orders, also

enjoys a considerable financial elevation for his sympathetic heart. He draws \$12,000 a year in salary and additional thousands in expense moneys from his depleted union treasury. He looks with an unsympathetic eye on the recently formed National Miners Union, a rival organization. Small minds conjecture that this is because the new union forbids salaries of its officials to be any higher than the rate of wages they can procure for the membership by strike or negotiations. Two years ago Brother Lewis enunciated the famous slogan, No Backward Step, as the keynote for the working contract that was to succeed the three-year agreement signed at Jacksonville, Fla., in the Winter of 1924. Since then, under his leadership, the wages of Illinois miners have been cut \$1.40 a day from the Jacksonville scale of \$7.50, and the miners of Brother Green's Ohio agreed to work for \$2.50 a day under the scale, but can find scarcely any work. The Indiana miners, cut to the Illinois level, are also shut out of many of their former working places. All over the country, except in Colorado, where the hated Industrial Workers of the World led a successful strike, the members of Brother Lewis's union have been compelled to take reduced wages. Was his slogan then only empty words? By no means. Soon after he had uttered it and while the fortunes of the organization were at their bottom ebb, he forced through a 50% salary increase for himself, from \$8000 a year to his present \$12,000. The slogan has thus not only been lived up to but improved upon.

Brother Lewis does not demean himself by attending all the sessions of the Parliament of Labor, but when he rises in his place he is recognized, no matter how many lesser delegates may have been struggling for the privilege of Brother Green's presiding eye. Respectful silence ensues. Though not a tall man, Brother Lewis is exceedingly stocky, with heavy shoulders and bust, bellows-like cheeks, lush lips and a luxuriant shock of black hair. He commands a distinguished stream of bull, flowing forth with admirably controlled

pitch and inflection. He is a master of the melodramatic pause. But alas, he has nothing to say. Plenty of words, but with negligible content. The following paragraphs from his New Orleans convention utterances show him at his best. In the first he is struggling to say thank you, and succeeding in ninety-six words:

My distinguished associate has very briefly discussed the matter before the house, conveying to you the verbal thanks of the United Mine Workers of America. I shall not undertake to amplify in further detail the matters which have been so ably referred to by Secretary Kennedy, other than to supplement his remarks and say, as the President of the United Mine Workers of America, that he has conveyed to you the feeling and the sentiment of every member of that organization when he says that they appreciate your services in their hour of need.

In the next quotation he wants to urge a postponement. The birth of this idea involves a labor of 114 words:

I do not at this time wish to inject this question into the convention as a matter of consideration or controversy. In supplementing the statement of my associate, I merely say that it might be a matter which could be examined and analyzed with profit to our movement, and perhaps our Executive Council, in the next year or two to come, might find it profitable to enter into a consideration, not necessarily of this idea, but of the general principle which we are now discussing, with the idea that perhaps at a later convention there might be made some well-considered and mature recommendations which might meet the emergency that we are now considering.

His habit of inflation is not confined to words. By reporting a huge fictitious membership to the secretary of the Federation he manages to hold his union in first place in voting strength at the convention, with 4000 votes, one for every 100 reported members. The actual membership is nearer 200,000 than 400,000. In reality, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners is the largest union, with 322,000 members and 3,220 honest votes.

President William Hutcheson of the Carpenters is another great magnate of the Federation. His emoluments are various and steep. Critics of his reign consider themselves lucky if they escape with whole skins and skulls from the clutches of his henchmen. At the recent convention of the

brotherhood in its home for aged carpenters at Lakeland, Florida, it was necessary to grant formal safe-conducts to the greatly daring gentlemen of the opposition, who, on saying their say, were invited to get out of the convention and out of the brotherhood and never come back again.

Brother Hutcheson was magnificently accommodated in what seemed to humbler delegates an endless suite of rooms at New Orleans. He would not see anyone ranking below an international union president or a member of the Executive Council. He spoke no word at the convention. His principal vexation was his inability to make up satisfactory foursomes for his regular afternoon recreation on the golf course.

III

Attorney Matthew Woll, recently resigned president of the International Photo-Engravers' Union of North America and still fourth vice-president of the Federation of Labor, is both hated and fawned upon. He is the tireless brains of the outfit. He heads more committees and does more work on each of them than any other magnate of labor. His ambition created the Union Labor Life Insurance Company. He is the president of the company and rumor has it that he sees a shorter cut to prominence and power through it than through the ordinary channels of labor advancement.

The death of the Immortal Gompers brought Brother Woll a bitter pill to swallow. Regarded during the great Samuel's lifetime as the heir-apparent to the Federation throne, he was ignominiously cast aside for the colorless William Green. A lesser man might have quit in disgust. But Brother Woll not only remained on the Executive Council; he made himself the undisputed master of its deliberations. He knew more than all the other reverend counsellors combined. He soon had Brother Green where he wanted him.

This was well illustrated at the Detroit convention in 1926. The sensation of that convention was the speech of the Rev.

Sherwood Eddy, Ph.B., A.M., on Soviet Russia. This pious friar had not been invited by the arrangements committee to make his speech, but by manipulations unknown to him things were brought to a point where President Green was willing to give him a place on the programme, provided he would not urge the recognition of the Soviet Union by the United States. Eddy agreed, and at the end of a long day he got the platform and launched into a tremendous eulogy of the Bolsheviks, "who are practising the brotherhood of man which we Christians profess but do not practise." He lauded practically everything Russian except the atheism, but he did not urge recognition of Moscow.

Brother Woll, shaper of Federation programmes and chief instigator of convention pogroms, was furious. He had not been consulted by the unwary Green. Tumultuous applause had greeted the Eddy address. Things were in a mess and Brother Green had to be taught a lesson. So Brother Woll demanded that he issue a statement declaring that Pastor Eddy had violated a promise in speaking at all about Russia. This Brother Green would not do. A Catholic like Woll might see the justification of using such means to a good end, but for Green the Baptist to smirch the good name of a representative of the Y. M. C. A. was too thick even for a labor politician.

But Brother Woll was equal to the occasion. A rumor spread mysteriously among the newspaper boys that Brother Green would have opposition for reelection as president. This was ghastly news. Brother Green's own union had no berth for him and no one else would want a discarded has-been. Where would his \$20,000 a year come from if he were defeated? The rumors multiplied, linking Brother Woll's name to the rival candidacy. Brother Green sweated, wilted and surrendered. He roundly denounced Pastor Eddy and so made a fool of himself, but he saved his \$20,000 and his reelection.

Promptly upon the distribution of the anti-Eddy statement to the reporters,

Brother Woll issued a statement of his own. In it he denied that he would be a candidate for the presidency, warmly praised Brother Green, and predicted his unanimous reelection. From that day to this Brother Green has always cast two frightened eyes about when anything untoward has happened in a convention. One, which goes in the direction of Brother Woll, inquires for the proper cue. The other furtively scans the press table to see if the reporters smell anything.

The many enemies of Brother Woll have much to say against him. They are repelled by his self-importance, his oily black locks, his strident bellowing, his make-up like Stephen A. Douglas, his thirst for publicity, his unscrupulous denunciation of every opponent as a Bolshevik, his gladsome coöperation with the police against more radical labor men, and his currying of favor with the anti-union elements of the National Civic Federation, of which he became acting president on the death of his fellow attorney, Judge Alton Brooks Parker. But his industry and intelligence and his command of the Federation machine make him extremely powerful, while his opponents generally do not belong to the inner circle of labor potentates. A Luxembourgish by birth, he has outdistanced the patriotism of the Sons and the Daughters of the American Revolution by several million leagues. His innumerable committees, conferences, commissions, councils and boards are forever investigating, excommunicating, recommending or treading, and he is perpetually issuing statements to the press.

There are many lesser Wolls and Lewises. There are also a few labor leaders who do not sing the prevailing tune. Outstanding at the New Orleans convention was Mrs. Florence Curtis Hanson, who leads the tiny group of unionized teachers. Her courage and ability and industry got little assistance in a convention wherein nearly all the progressives were either cowed or tired. If I give Mrs. Hanson little space I am faithfully depicting the actual scene.

IV

It is not often that a Sherwood Eddy busts in on the disinfected convention programme. The general run of invited speakers is comprised of carefully selected purveyors of blah, well tested by previous experience. Constant repeaters are such worthies as the Coolidge-Hoover Secretary of Labor, the Hon. James J. Davis, grand cockalorum of the Moose. He reminds the delegates annually how prosperous everybody is and gets by with it very easily in a crowd where a union executive drawing only \$5,000 a year is considered beneath contempt. At New Orleans he pulled all the old sure-fires. Then he tried a new one, and the delegates didn't know whether to laugh out loud or to catcall. In their indecision they remained sullenly silent as James proclaimed:

Some of you may have been politically opposed to Mr. Coolidge, which was your privilege, but I want you to know, now that he is on the eve of retiring from active participation in politics, that no sincerer friend of labor has ever sat in the White House.

For eight years the strike-breaking American Legion has been regularly represented on the convention list of invited speakers. This will appear less curious when it is explained that the chief sponsor of the Legion is its former vice-commander, George L. Berry, president of the International Printing Pressmen's and Assistants' Union of North America, and himself an accomplished strike-breaker within his own union. By preference the Legion orator is a rhetorical exponent of patriotic sentiment. At New Orleans none other than the Hon. Paul V. McNutt, national commander, was the exhibit.

McNutt did his stuff without reproach. Standing at attention, his eyes fixed on the horizon of battle, his manly figure belying his graying but plenteous hair, he magnetized all eyes upon him as he was introduced. No romantic school girl could have withstood him. The herd of delegates instinctively felt themselves inferior. They

clapped and cheered, and got on their hind legs. When he pulled the tremolo stop, referring pathetically to the immortal war dead, they were near tears, just as they rocked with rage when he denounced the dastardly traitors who want to enthrone the working class in our beautiful land and destroy American institutions. McNutt had them where he wanted them until, like Davis, he went a bit too far. He tried to sell them the Legion's favorite nostrum of wartime conscription of labor. That touched the pocket nerve and he failed. Not that the labor leaders object to conscription *per se*. But military conscription of labor might mean that their union members would have to work for a dollar a day instead of at wartime scales. Where would the dues come from to pay the supersalaries of the union executives? So conscription was not sold to the convention.

The previous year the military performer was the heroic Major General Charles P. Summerall, chief of staff of the Army. He chose to address the toilers in the bluff, hearty English manner. President Green had fawningly introduced him as one "whose great heart beats in sympathy with the legitimate hopes and aspirations of the organized labor movement." Whereupon the warrior returned:

I know that your aspirations are the aspirations of the good men in industry and finance. I have sometimes been startled by almost the same sentiments that I have heard from Mr. Green coming from what we might call captains of industry and finance.

The red flag, so familiar to European labor gatherings, is as remote to the American shepherds of toil as the pick and shovel. The fraternal delegates from the British labor movement constantly though unconsciously offend the ears and defile the records of the Federation by giving utterance to purely labor sentiments instead of paying homage to the articles of faith of capitalism.

No flippant reporter could be more exquisitely punished than by being assigned to sit through the nine or ten days of prac-

tically unrelieved convention oratory and pettifoggery. With heavy hoof the brothers plod through the routine. It begins with invocations to that deity who placed labor as a curse upon the brow of mankind. It continues with oily syllables of welcome from city and State magnificoes and the well tried wisdom of invited rhetoricians. It works its way through a bog of where-asinine resolutions and peripatetic committee recommendations, damp-powder fulminations *ex cathedra* and the caprine capers of dear sirs and brothers sweating rhetoric for the edification of gaping constituents back home. In short, it is Congress all over again.

But lo, the ominous murmur of the mob is heard! A victim has been found. The annual witchburning, which alone makes the Parliament of Labor endurable to delegates and correspondents, is on. Heavy jowls spread in fierce joy. Cannibalistic leers turn toward known or reputed friends of the heretic. Favored gentlemen of the press are tipped off. Alleys of escape are barricaded. Righteous wrath mounts to lynching temperature. The miserable prey is seized and the gory feast begins.

The crucified messiah of 1928 was the estimable Dr. John Dewey, professor of philosophy at Columbia University. In 1926 he was the Pastor Eddy already mentioned. In 1923 he was that roughneck Red, Comrade William F. Dunne, now assistant editor of the *Daily Worker*, the Communist organ in New York.

Each time the indictment returned to Judge Lynch charges the same monstrous crime—Communism. In Dunne's case it was true. But poor innocent Eddy did not even know that the organized vehicle for such enormities in this country is the Workers (Communist) Party of America. And while Dr. Dewey's occasional abstruseness may properly come under suspicion, his Communism would not pass muster with the third assistant subcommissar of sanitation at the Russo-Polish frontier.

Brother Woll is by common acclaim looked up to as the ringleader of these mobs. Hoarse and strident of voice, and in full control of the organ stops of injured integrity and moral indignation as well as of patriotism and religion, the worthy Matt spurs on the pack. The business over, the delegates relapse into their normal selves—the prosperous business men and contractors of labor power they were when they opened the convention.

At the Portland gathering, when Comrade Dunne was to be the sacrifice, things did not turn so peacefully. The convention managers have improved upon their methods since then. At that time they thought it would add to the fun if the victim were allowed to writhe in his agony upon the platform. So Comrade Dunne was allowed to make the customary speech of the condemned before having his bones broken. Never again! Comrade Dunne said too much and said it too forthrightly. He framed a just epitaph for the Parliament of Labor. With his words let us close:

Mr. Chairman, this is not the first time I have faced a white-collared mob aroused to frenzy by the press of its masters and bent upon my destruction. It is not the first time that my head has been asked as the price of peace and harmony; but in the capitalist courts I am not called an enemy of the trade union movement. Rather do they say that I call upon the workers to resist the attack of the employers.

I make a distinction, however, between you, international officers, and the membership. When I said in a speech the other night that this convention was not a working class gathering, I meant what I said. I told the truth. You know I told the truth and none of you dare deny it. Workers! Drawing the same salaries as the employers, living in the same hotels, eating the same food, belonging to the same fraternal orders, hob-nobbing with them in their clubs! What do you know or care about the eternal struggle of the wage earners except that it forces you to apologize to the bosses from time to time and disavow any radical tendencies? You want to prove to the employers that you are more conservative than they are, that you love the wage system even more ardently than they do. Seeking to placate the employers, you have bled from within their organizations, but you have captured nothing but jewel-studded lodge charms. You may save yourselves, but you cannot save the unions.

BREEDING A RACE OF GODS

BY ARTURO F. RATTI

THE modern art and science of building perfect and beautiful bodies was invented at Harvard by the famous but now lamented Professor Dudley Allen Sargent, A.B., A.M., M.D., Sc.D. Known to his fellow *savants* as the Father of Modern Physical Education, Dr. Sargent brought to the groves of Cambridge several trainloads of "chest-weights, chest-expanders, developers, quarter-circles, leg-machines, finger-machines, etc." Later on he added "strength-measurers, individual dynamometers, condition-testers, pulleys, and levers." Beside inventing most of these machines and using them on his students at Harvard, Dr. Sargent also built better bodies for the matriculants at Chautauqua and at his own private seminary, the celebrated Sargent School.

His main work, of course, was at Harvard, where, in addition to keeping his strength-measurers and condition-testers well greased, he also inscribed his name on the scrolls of history by adding to the austere Harvard faculty a staff of "instructors in boxing and fencing, and a supervisor for the bowling alleys." His "Health, Strength, and Power" is still a much-thumbed text-book at most of the American colleges. Of great influence, too, have been his monographs on "The Care of the Body," in the *Christian Union*, "Home Exercises for the Business Man," in the *Saturday Evening Post*, and "How Can I have a Graceful Figure?" in the *Ladies' Home Journal*. For such and other labors Professor Sargent was four times made president of the American Physical Education Association, the chief sodality of the body engineers. Here are some strophes on him,

penned by Amos R. Wells, a former apprentice:

A Sargent there is who with brushes and paint
Will picture a man, scholar or saint. . . .
But the Sargent we know has a loftier skill
The muscles to strengthen, the hollows to fill,
The bearing to dignify, the eyes to illumine,
The face to make fair as a garden in bloom. . . .
No Pickford or Chaplin or Fairbanks can vie
With the warmth of the hand and the light of
the eye
And the glow of the body and vigor of mind
Displayed in the moves by Sargent designed.

In the same tome as these lines are similar tributes in prose by such eminent men as President Lowell of Harvard and Theodore Roosevelt *filis*.

Dr. Sargent, as I have hinted, has now passed to his reward. For a time his work was carried on at Harvard by Professor Geer, but he succumbed to the noxious fumes of carbon monoxide and now Harvard has lost leadership in body-building. Worse, its decay has spread through the entire State of Massachusetts. Thus, with the exception of the Y. M. C. A. College at Springfield and the romantic Wellesley College at Wellesley, most of the State's otherwise progressive seminaries of learning pay only scant attention to the new science. Even the great Boston University, the home of such modern disciplines as Bible Engineering and Advanced Banking, seems to have slipped badly. The best that Boston displays are a few scattered courses in Physical Education and Technique, Folk Dances, and First Aid. For its nascent business scientists it has a body-building programme consisting of "one hour each week of gymnasium exercises," but it is combined, oddly enough, with two weekly hours of Trigonometry and Surveying.