

A Conspiracy Against the Workers of the Americas

By
Manuel Gomez

ARTICLE I.

The fifth convention of the Pan-American Federation of Labor, which met in Washington, D. C., July 18-23, was the most significant gathering ever held by that so-called organization. Certainly it attracted far more attention than the previous conventions, not only in the United States but throughout the western world.

Increased popular interest was not due to growth, for the Pan-American Federation of Labor has not grown. The convention acquired significance because:

Great Interest In Gathering.

(1) Massacre of 300 Nicaraguans by the United States Marines at Ocotol, Nicaragua, was reported in the midst of the first morning's session;

(2) Considerable tension was known to have existed following the ambiguous stand of the A. F. of L. leaders and the Mexican Confederation of Labor, of special importance in view of the fact that the Mexican confederation is the only bona fide general labor organization in Latin America affiliated to the so-called Pan-American federation;

(3) This is the first convention of the Pan-American Federation of Labor at which there has been any kind of straight-out opposition to the administration.

Not Stormy Convention.

Contrary to the impression given by the press, it was not a stormy convention. In fact it was extraordinarily quiet except for two days out of the six. The A. F. of L. delegates were in easy, monotonous control up to the very end, when the officers of the Pan-American Federation of Labor (William Green, president; Luis N. Morones of Mexico, vice-president; Santiago Iglesias, secretary, and Matthew Woll, treasurer) were unanimously reelected by a rising vote.

The only high lights of the convention were: (1) the Ocotol massacre and the discussion on the resolution submitted by the Nicaraguan delegation; (2) discussion on the Haitian question; (3) discussion on the Monroe Doctrine and American imperialism in general; (4) the attacks against the reds; (5) the silence of the Mexican delegation, which submitted no resolutions on Mexican or Latin-American relations and which did not participate in any of the discussions, with the exception of Morones's opening and closing addresses as vice-president of the Pan-American Federation of Labor.

Against Workers.

But these things were enough. In the situations created by them the stifled cry against American imperialism was released in the convention. Secondly, the entire convention was exposed, and with it the so-called Pan-American Federation of Labor, as nothing less than a conspiracy against the working class of the Americas.

The sessions were held in the restful detachment of the A. F. of L. council chamber, on the top floor of the American Federation of Labor building. They were attended by some 20-odd delegates, nine or ten newspapermen, a sprinkling of curious idlers, a number of A. F. of L. intellectual hangers-on, and a busy army of government spies—United States spies, Cuban spies, Peruvian spies, Venezuelan spies . . . amateur and professional spies . . . spies of all nature and description who watched suspicious individuals like myself when we were in the building and who followed us whenever we left it.

Represent Small Groups.

As to the delegates themselves, the A. F. of L. was represented by Green (who presided), Woll, Morrison, Noonan and Wilson. The Mexican Confederation of Labor was represented by its big Chief, Morones, and by

(This is the first of a series of articles analyzing the Pan-American Federation of Labor and its recent convention at Washington.)

FOR six days delegates claiming to represent the organized workers of North, South and Central America met and debated. On the first day of the convention the associated press reported that 300 Nicaraguans had been slaughtered by the U. S. marines in Nicaragua. The news echoed thruout the world but it did not shake the convention, presided over by President William Green of the A. F. of L. A resolution of protest submitted by the Nicaraguan delegation was quietly brushed aside, a "respectful petition" to President Coolidge being adopted in its place. Why? How is it that the convention did not take up a single important matter of practical trade-union co-operation on behalf of the workers of the Americas? What is this "Pan-American Federation of Labor" and how is it that reports of its convention filled the newspapers with attacks against American imperialism while the convention itself engaged in no such attack? What did Latin America learn as a result of the opposition of a single delegate at the convention? What is the future of all-American working class co-operation in relation to the "Pan-American Federation of Labor"? These and other questions are answered by Manuel Gomez in the present series of articles on the Pan-American Federation of Labor and its convention, written especially for *The DAILY WORKER*. Gomez is secretary of the United States section of the All-America Anti-Imperialist League, having sections in twelve countries of the American continent. He attended every session of the convention and has been in close touch with the affairs of the Pan-American Federation of Labor for a number of years.

Moneda and Yudico,—the latter leaving after the second day to attend the forthcoming congress of the Amsterdam International.

In addition President Green reported delegates present from nine countries: Porto Rico, Cuba, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Panama, Venezuela, Colombia and Peru. Of these the Porto Ricans represented an organization which is not independent but which is an integral part of the A. F. of L., the Cubans represented an organization which is confined to a single industry and is only one of a number of Cuban unions in that industry, the four delegations from Central America represented organizations having only the shadow of actual existence, the Peruvian delegation represented organizations which do not exist at all, and the Colombian delegation never appeared.

No Serious Action.

The convention proceeded in a leisurely way, refusing to get excited even over the Ocotol massacre. It did not grapple seriously with a single practical trade union measure.

Here is what it did do:

(1) Recommended to all governments not having a Department of Labor to institute one.

(2) Recommended to all governments to add labor attaches to their embassy and consular staffs in foreign countries.

(3) Adopted a protest against the dictatorship of Juan Vicente Gomez in Venezuela.

(4) Urged that effective control of the National Bank of Nicaragua, now in the hands of Wall Street interests, be turned over to the Nicaraguan government.

(5) Attacked the relatively powerful Argentine labor movement on the excuse of disunity and radicalism, and announced the intention of substituting it by a "legitimate federation of trade unions affiliated to the Pan-American Federation of Labor."

Attack Communists.

(6) Attacked the Communist International and the Communists in every country.

(7) Adopted a resolution submitted by the A. F. of L. delegation and embodying the entire substance of the "Monroe Doctrine of Labor" as expounded by Matthew Woll at the El Paso and Atlantic City conventions of the A. F. of L.

(8) Killed an effective protest against the rape of Nicaragua by American imperialism; heading off original resolution by adopting a harmless substitute.

(9) Killed a general resolution against American imperialism.

(10) Killed a resolution providing that the United States government be asked to indemnify the family of a Haitian citizen murdered by a drunken U. S. marine in Haiti.

(11) Adopted a recommendation of the committee on officers' report praising the accomplishments of the last Pan-American Commercial Conference.

Green Addresses Gathering.

(12) Reelected the officers.

(13) Thanked the officers.

(14) Selected Havana as the next convention city of the Pan-American Federation of Labor.

The above list includes all of the resolutions and decisions passed with the exception of those which were so trivial as to make it unnecessary to refer to them here.

President Green's opening address was a paean of praise for "pure and simple" trade-unionism as practised by the A. F. of L. leadership. It was also a pompous repetition of meaningless abstractions like "freedom," "liberty," "justice" and "democracy." But there were other things in the address, which might easily have deceived someone unfamiliar with Green's lingo. He said he would oppose the use of armed force by the United States against any Latin-American nation, declared against intervention of any kind and expressed belief in the doctrine of self-determination for all nations. His declarations were soon to be put to the test.

After Green came the vice-presidential speech of Morones, which was one long harangue against the reds. It was at this point that the news of the Ocotol massacre was made known.

Message Of Death.

That message of death from Nicaragua ought to have determined the character of the whole convention from then on, firing it with the spirit of indignant militancy against American imperialism. But it did nothing of the sort. One of the Nicaraguan delegates, Solomon de la Selva, made one passionate appeal and after parliamentary objections and filibustering by the A. F. of L. delegation—finally succeeded in getting his resolution before the convention. That was all. Matthew Woll's committee on resolutions then got in its dirty work, with de la Selva weakly assenting. The newspapermen made much of the Nicaraguan matter, and with reason. But the convention did not. As for de la Selva, he showed himself to be a phrase-maker who carried on no real fight on this or any other issue.

One Fighting Delegate.

The "straight-out oppositin" which I mentioned at the opening of this article came entirely from one delegate. It was not a sustained opposition and it did not manifest itself at all, except by occasional inferences, until the fourth day of the convention. Yet the nature of it was such as to distinguish it sharply from the

play-acting of de la Selva, and to accomplish everything worth while that was accomplished at the convention—exposure of Green, Woll, Morrison et al and their handpicked fellow-conspirators from Latin America.

Draws Green Out.

The delegate to whom I refer was Ricardo A. Martinez, representing the Venezuelan Labor Union. Hesitant and unsure of himself as he was, Martinez fought a real fight whereas everyone in the room could feel, instinctively that de la Selva had fought a sham fight. Martinez made Green and the others fight back and show their hands. The Venezuelan delegate offered a resolution which not only denounced the Monroe Doctrine and attacked American imperialism along the whole line, but which proposed concrete measures for struggle against it. Moreover, in defending his resolution he went outside the circumscribed field of Latin America and called for independence for the Philippine Islands and withdrawal of the U. S. troops from China. He voted for his resolution too, against the inevitable substitute of the resolutions committee—with not a single other delegate supporting him.

With the exception of this resolution of Martinez's, and one other, every decision taken by the convention was unanimous. The other exception was on the motion to make Havana the next convention city. Nine delegates held out bravely for Guatemala City!

Conclusions.

In the series of articles to which the present is an introduction the writer will analyze the convention in detail, explaining the following conclusions which the convention helped to establish:

(1) That despite nine years of effort on the part of the A. F. of L. bureaucracy who control it the Pan-American Federation of Labor is still virtually a paper organization.

(2) That outside of Mexico it only exists at all in Latin America by basing itself on nondescript individuals most of whom are in the service of Wall Street-owned, reactionary and bitterly anti-labor governments in need of a labor fig-leaf.

(3) That the Pan-American Federation of Labor does not constructive trade-union work, nor does it engage in struggle of any kind on behalf of the workers of the Americas.

(4) That the Pan-American Federation of Labor is a labor instrument of the Monroe Doctrine as expressed in the foreign policy of Wall Street and Washington.

(5) That the purpose of the Pan-American Federation of Labor is to disarm Latin America, and particularly the Latin American workers, in the face of American imperialism.

(6) That the Pan-American Federation of Labor is now trying to expand by destroying every vigorous Latin-American trade-union organization and replacing it with a servile body dominated by the Pan-American Federation of Labor.

Besides illustrating each of these points, I shall endeavor to set forth a positive line of action for the workers of the Americas, as against that laid down by the leaders of the so-called Pan-American Federation of Labor.

The following articles in this most interesting series on a subject of vital importance to American workers, will appear in the regular issues of *The DAILY WORKER*, beginning Monday.