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SAMUEL GOMPERS AND AMERICAN CONSENSUS

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Ignoring the excellent advice of Louis Hartz that the best way to cope with an opposing historical school is to ignore it, I propose here to examine the thought of Samual Gompers in terms of the general pattern presented in Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America.*[1] Hartz, of course, in examining the American commitment – conscious or unconscious – to Lockian "irrational liberalism," is interested in the intellectual, and intellectual Gompers certainly was not. Nevertheless, the views of the dominant figure in American "working-class" history – articulated over a span of nearly forty years in public statements, in monthly editorials for the *American Federationist,* and in a voluminous correspondence with other working class leaders at home and abroad – seem particularly important in questioning the validity of Hartz's thesis as applied to the Progressive era. Labor leaders in other countries by and large endorsed class-conscious political parties, while Gompers so persistently opposed any such course. Does this reflect on Gompers' part, therefore, an awareness of the American workers' indissoluble attachment to the liberal democratic tradition as Hartz postulates, an attachment which Gompers himself shared? This is the basic question.

Undoubtedly, the writings of Gompers abound in statements to gladden the heart of the Hartzian scholar. These are not just the famous reply to socialist proposals at the 1903 A. F. of L. convention: "I am not only at variance with your philosophy; economically you are unsound, socially you are wrong, industrially you are impossible" – more a universal condemnation than a statement of anything unique about America. Nor the death-bed benediction: "God bless our American institutions: May they grow better day by day," which, considered alongside his diatribes against the Supreme Court only a few months before, suggests there was indeed room for improvement. No, there are even more apt statements than these. In 1917, for instance, when the subject of government sponsored social insurance arose, Gompers, after dilating on the "weakening of independence of spirit and virility" which this would involve, remarked that it was "at variance with our concepts of voluntary institutions and of freedom for individuals." Again, "It is

[1] Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York, 1955).

in the nature of government to concede as little as possible to the governed in order to retain its power and to concentrate its efforts upon the perpetuation of its control" was his verdict on Australian labor's success at the polls, in a statement reminiscent of the Constitutional restrictions so beloved, according to Hartz, of even the most democratic of Americans. Gompers' statements comparing Europe and America often add grist to the Hartzian mill. "Our task was more difficult than that of the British labor movement in dealing with similar issues," he reflected. "England accepted class distinctions and was willing to enact legislation giving wage earners relief without concerning herself closely as to the underlying philosophy that justified the action." The concern with "underlying philosophy" seems curious in a man who spent so much time ridiculing the abstractions of the socialists, but it does seem a very conscious assertion of a liberal consensus. [2]

Gompers' statements about labor's representation in the National Civic Federation, on the other hand, do not really corroborate the Hartzian analysis. True, as early as 1901 Gompers wrote, "Proper enquiry may lead to the conclusion that despite the clamour which we hear and the conflicts which occasionally occur, there is a constant trend towards agreement between laborers and capitalists, employed and employer, for the uninterrupted production and distribution of wealth, and too, with ethical consideration for the common interests of all the people," all of which sounds like the aim of the Civic Federation, founded soon afterwards. It is also true that Gompers was the constant butt of the Socialists for being the dupe of "an insidious plot to rob labor of its independence, virility and militant enthusiasm." One critic claimed that Civic Federation Secretary Ralph Easley told Mark Hanna, one of its earliest backers, that "the vanity of labor leaders could be played upon, and coupled with the opinions that they sometimes voiced regarding the identity of interests between the employer and employed could be turned to great advantage." But Gompers maintained that no trade unionist would "pretend much less declare that the interests of the workmen and capitalists are identical," and he quoted the old preamble of the A. F. of L constitution to prove it : "Whereas a struggle is going on in all the nations of the civilized world between the oppressors and the oppressed of all countries, a struggle between the capitalist and the laborer, which grows in intensity from year to year... etc."

[2] A. F. of L., *Proceedings 1903*, 198. Frank Morrison to Daniel J. Tobin, December 13, 1924. Statement in Gompers Papers, dated 1917. Gompers to Jon P. Meade, April 25, 1916. Samuel Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor* (New York, 1925), II, 290. — N.B.: Unless otherwise stated, all letters quoted are in Gompers Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison.

Gompers rationalized the Civic Federation as a meeting place of two of the voluntary equal groups that constitued American society, but as Hartz argues: "To interpret America in terms of the groups it peculiarly evolves is to miss the nature of the national liberal world as badly as to interpret it in terms of 'conservative' and 'radical.'" Still, as James Weinstein has explained, the Civic Federation was a sincere attempt to deal with social problems without altering the basic tenets of American capitalism. It can therefore be taken as evidence of Gompers' acceptance of consensus, even if not such a complete consensus as Hartz postulates. [3]

At any rate, it is not a difficult task to find some corroborating evidence spread throughout Gompers' writings for what Louis Hartz refers to as Gompers' "job consciousness" — the only possible response "in a land where labor was truly bourgeois." This is not, however, the whole story.

One thing is clear: Gompers regarded the A. F. of L. as a class movement, and at times resented any suggestion that it was not. "As a matter of fact," he said in 1897, "there is no other organization of labor in the entire world that is so class-conscious as the trade unions." Over the years the application of this class consciousness was not consistent, but Gompers never abandoned it. [4]

There is the paradox, however, that Gompers consistently advocated craft unionism as the only possible basis for the A. F. of L., thus causing most historians to emphasize "job consciousness" as the key to Gompers' outlook. This discrepancy between his professed class consciousness and the A. F. of L.'s actual concentration on the skilled worker also roused the wrath of the socialists, causing some, though only a minority, to sympathize with industrial movements outside the A. F. of L.

In Gompers' mind, however, there was no paradox. Rather than something he had to rationalize, Gompers' emphasis on craft unionism was, in a sense, an expression of his class consciousness. The distinction between skilled and unskilled was artificial: all workers could be organized and class solidarity rose naturally among workers of the same occupation combined in a trade union. "There

[3] Gompers, "Organized Labor: Its Struggles, Its Enemies and False Friends," *American Federationist*, VIII, 11 (November, 1901), 479. Morris Hillquit, The Civic Federation and Labor (Undated Pamphlet). A. Ledots, "The National Civic Federation," *International Socialist Review*, X, 9 (March, 1910). Gompers to John J. Henley, March 20, 1911. Hartz, 30. James Weinstein, "Gompers and the New Liberalism," *Studies on the Left*, I, 4 (Fall, 1965), 94-105.

[4] Hartz, 247. John Curtis Kennedy, "Socialist Tendencies in American Trade Unions," *International Socialist Review*, VIII, 6 (December, 1907), 330-345, quoting Gompers in *American Federationist*, August, 1897.

are no more effective efforts to organize labor encompassing all kinds of workers," he told an official of the National Civic Federation, "than are contained in the oft misunderstood word 'trade union.'" Though based on craft autonomy, the A. F. of L. remained "a haven of refuge for every unorganized working man and woman." The alternative was some unstable structure like the former Knights of Labor, originating in the mind of some middle-class idealist. [5]

But, besides seeing the A. F. of L. as a class-conscious organization, Gompers also had theoretical views of society which are strangely at variance with his "Americanism." For instance, he often took pains to demonstrate that his conception of trade unions more clearly conformed to Marxism than did the socialist political parties. Gompers himself had been involved in labor party activity connected with the Henry George mayorality race of 1886 and the experience had taught him to avoid third party politics. For the moment socialists agreed, but with Daniel DeLeon's rise, the Socialist Labor Party again returned to the polls and at the same time attempted to use the trade unions as a kind of economic adjunct. There was bound to be trouble. But, although the nineties witnessed a series of flare-ups between Gompers and the political socialists, Gompers seems to have retained much of his Marxist outlook. For instance, when at the 1890 A. F. of L. convention he refused representation to the Central Labor Federation of New York on the grounds that it contained socialists who were not trade unionists — a move often quoted to show Gompers' new view of trade unionism — he wrote to, of all people, Frederick Engels, whom he hoped would reveal that Gompers was "logically and scientifically correct." Engels did not reply since he expected to see Gompers personally, but he later admitted that Gompers had a perfect right to exclude whomsoever he pleased. [6]

Thus Gompers' "pure and simple trade unionism," as he called it, was not, or at least not originally, the "business unionism" or "job consciousness" of later years, but simply a working-class movement based exclusively on economic action. This explains Gompers' opposition to the attempt from within the trade unionist ranks to have the A. F. of L. endorse a Socialist-Labor-Populist platform in

[5] Gompers to J. L. Philips, August 5, 1914. Gompers to Horace A. Keefer, December 19, 1916. See also Gompers' letter to *Cleveland Citizen*, I (June 30, 1891), 4.

[6] Gompers to Friedrich Engels, January 9, 1891 (Samuel Gompers' Copybooks, A. F. of L. Archives, Washington, D.C.). Engels to Hermann Schlueter, January 29, 1891. Engels to F. A. Sorge, January 6, 1892. The last two letters in Alexander Trachtenberg, ed., *Letters to Americans* (New York, 1953), 233-234, 240.

1894-95 – a movement also opposed by the purist DeLeon. But when DeLeon, dissatisfied with an economic movement independent of the Socialist Labor Party, launched his futile Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance in 1896, Gompers was not slow in making his views known. What is interesting, however, is how he still insisted that it was DeLeon who had abandoned the tenets of true Marxism.

DeLeon, according to Gompers, led a movement absolutely unique, for there was not an authority on the labor movement "from the time of Marx to the present day, in England, Germany in fact in any part of Europe or the United States – but who this fellow does not practically declare is "out of step" mentally, and that he alone has the patent process to emancipate labor." "The *so-called* socialists of New York," Gompers remarked elsewhere, "are at variance and in conflict with the best writers, thinkers, and actors in the socialist movement in every other part of the world." Thus Gompers could claim, with justice, that his differences were "not so much with the socialists of America as such, but rather a few of them in New York city." He believed that people who had spent their lives building up the trade unions, so that they were feared and respected by the money class, were unsafe from the attacks of a few who had never worked for wages in their lives. Answering Socialist Party critics in 1902, he said : "There is not a socialist that can find in all [Marx's] utterances one word for the co-operative commonwealth." [7]

The specific claims of being more consistent with Marxism obviously disappear from Gompers' writings after this, yet some of its basic ideas keep recurring. "Under the present rules of the game," he wrote in 1916, "The power to control opportunity, whether political, economic or social, is held by those who manipulate the financial agencies of society and thereby control credit. Those who do the real creative work have been dominated by exploiters who usurped the glory and benefits of their achievements. The real power that governs our national life and development is exercised from Wall Street." This statement might have been influenced by the particular events of the time, but even in his memoirs, Gompers writes : "Whoever or whatever controls economic power directs and shapes development for the group or the nation." [8]

A very Marxist view of power, of course, does not make a Marxist : Gompers offered no final solution to the problem of economic and

[7] *American Federationist,* V, 6 (August, 1898), 115-116; V, 2 (April, 1898), 37-38. Gompers to Ben Tillett, May 2, 1896 (Samuel Gompers' Copybooks). A. F. of L., *Proceedings 1902,* 182-183.

[8] Gompers, "Editorial," *American Federationist,* XXIII, 11 (November, 1916), 1067. Gompers, *Seventy Years,* I, 287.

political power, other than the day-to-day demands of the trade unions. These demands would steadily increase but the idea of a final result, apart from vague ideas of "emancipation" of the workers, was irrelevant. Nevertheless, Morris Hillquit had a point in asserting, while cross-examining Gompers during the Industrial Relations Commission, that, logically at least, Gompers' views were not basically different from the socialists', even if Gompers chose not to push his arguments to their logical conclusion. Ralph Easley of the Civic Federation saw the point. "In one place the record has you practically admitting that the unions' goal is to take 'all,' which is about what the socialists propose," he wrote to Gompers. "Hasn't the reporter got that mixed up?" [9]

Yet in equating Gompers' basic philosophy with the socialists', Hillquit missed an important point – namely Gompers' fundamental mistrust of politics and the whole legislative process. Writing to Edgar Wallace, the socialist editor of the United Mine Workers' Journal, for instance, he wrote, "One need but read the history of the toilers to learn how potent has been the power vested in the constituted authorities of the time to twist laws intended to be of interest to the workers to their very undoing, even to the verge of tyranny and enslavement." Gomperism thus contains a strong element of what we might call "syndicalism," i.e. a rather Marxist analysis of society, combined with a strong suspicion of politics and a reliance on economic power to bring about changes. [10]

Of course, it can be argued that "syndicalism" is the wrong expression and that Gompers merely advocated traditional American "voluntarism" and mistrust of government generally. This view has a certain validity and is probably the view Gompers would like to have left us with in his memoirs, when he wrote that American institutions were "founded upon the basic principle of equality and American labor had to make plain that it did not request special privilege but economic opportunity." Perhaps some of his remarks about European syndicalists, moreover, support the Hartzian view. Their abandonment of politics, according to Gompers, showed that European labor movements were "coming out of their early crudities." Moreover, if their leaders still called themselves socialists, Gompers had a Hartzian explanation: "Historically, and for the lack of another title for the party of opposition to monarchy and privilege," he argued,

[9] U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations, *Industrial Relations Final Report and Testimony*, 1916, II, 1474-1475, 1528-1530. Ralph Easley to Gompers, May 26, 1914.

[10] Gompers to Edgar Wallace, October 28, 1915.

"those members may call themselves socialists: actually nine tenths of their work is just the same as that of the A. F. of L." [11]

Nevertheless, there is more to Gompers' "syndicalism" than traditional American voluntarism. Back in 1892, he had announced: "As for your political parties, I say a plague on all of them. I have seen men march through mud and rain wearing glazed hats and carrying candles stuck on sticks and go to the polls and vote the Democratic or Republican ticket and the next morning go to the factory and Democrats and Republicans alike found wages reduced twenty-five per cent." Something of this spirit lingered on in Gompers' thought. At the A. F. of L. convention in 1900, he denied that the ballot was the only way out, and insisted there was more character built up by the strike than "by a decade of schooling." This syndicalist aspect of Gompers' thought contrasts sharply with the views of the Socialist Party, which, on the whole, seemed to have much greater faith in the efficacy of American institutions. For example, Gompers attacked the American Association for Labor Legislation for efforts to pass health insurance bills as in England and Germany, claiming it was dangerous to give politicians more power. Health insurance schemes, moreover, smacked of more power to employers. When socialist Meyer London brought forward a resolution in Congress for the appointment of a commission to prepare a plan for the establishment of a national insurance fund, Gompers objected. "It has been the constant struggle of the workers through the ages," he maintained, "to get the tentacles of government from the throats of the workers." Besides, measures like social insurance, he felt, took "the vitality out of trade unions – as in England." [12] Another statement of Gompers on European syndicalism, moreover, shows him to be considerably more than the traditional voluntarist. When socialist William English Walling explained in the *American Federationist* that French syndicalists understood "Marx's advice to the working class to go into politics, not as calling for the formation of a political party, but as signifying only that the struggle of labor against capital must eventually become a political struggle in the largest sense of that term," Gompers wrote that Walling's article was "especially important, not only as showing

[11] Gompers, *Seventy Years*, II, 290. Gompers, "Growth and Differentiation," *American Federationist*, XVII, 3 (March, 1910), 221; "The American Labor Movement," *American Federationist*, XXI, 8 (August, 1914), 628; "Upton Sinclair's Mental Marksmanship," *American Federationist*, XXI, 4 (April, 1914), 293.

[12] "Wise Words: Gompers at Kansas City," *Cleveland Citizen*, March 6, 1891, 6. A. F. of L., *Proceedings 1900*, 134. Gompers, "Labor versus its Barnacles," *American Federationist*, XXII, 4 (April, 1916), 268-270; "Voluntary Social Insurance versus Compulsory," *American Federationist*, XXIII, 5, 6 and 8 (May, June and August, 1916), 333-357; 453-456; 669-681.

the trend of the trade union movement in other countries, but as exemplifying some phases of the situation" in America. "We have for many years held that the labor unions must be free and independent of all other class movements," he explained, "and that politically they must consider the interests of the workers as above that of any political party, no matter how aggressive or how friendly the politics of such a party might be." [13]

Curiously, something of these syndicalist ideas seemed to have revived in Gompers' thought after the First World War, perhaps, as one writer has suggested, under the influence of G. D. H. Cole's syndicalist derived Guild Socialism. Speaking of the unemployed in 1921, Gompers said: "If there were nothing else, that simple and obvious tragedy would be a sufficient indictment of the captains of industry and the princes of finance and of their incapacity to rule the industrial destinies of this nation." He went on: "It is my judgment and firm conviction that all those who sacrificed so much to free the world from military autocracy will not consent to its substitution by "industrial autocracy." Later, he complained of a conspiracy "to restore and maintain absolute and autocratic control of American industry." These are odd words indeed for a "business unionist," though they do not necessarily make him a guild socialist. In the years following, however, particularly in articles in the *Sunday World,* his thought became clearer. Titles like "Samuel Gompers Seeks Self-Government of Industry" and "Industrial Democracy must come and surely will come" show the direction towards Guild Socialism, however much he avoided the phrase. One writer in the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union Journal — long an opponent of Gompers — took pleasure in pointing out the change. [14]

If Gompers revealed himself something of a syndicalist in his view of the pointlessness of the legislative process, it was probably in his writing on the judiciary that he reveals his views on the capitalists' domination of America. Looking back in 1916, Gompers wrote: "To further the interests of hostile employers, judges arrogated into courts, powers not delegated to them.... By this perversion of the writ of injunction the courts sought to deny the workers the right to those legitimate activities that were necessary in order to carry out the purposes of organized labor. In addition to this perversion of

[13] William English Walling, "The New Unionism in Europe," *American Federationist,* XV, 6 (June, 1908), 441. Gompers, "Editorial: Trade Unions lead in all Reforms," *American Federationist,* XV, 6 (June, 1908), 458.

[14] Speech in Philadelphia, quoted Saul Yanovsky, "A New Gompers," *Justice,* III (April 29, 1921), 24. Gompers, "Editorial," *American Federationist,* XXIX, 10 (October, 1922), 721-739. Harry Lang, "Gompersism," *Justice,* VI (February 1, 1924), 8-9. See also, Louis S. Reed, *The Labor Philosophy of Samuel Gompers* (New York, 1930), 177.

the writ of injunction the courts misconstrued anti-trust legislation to apply to associations of workers." [15]

When Gompers and two other officials of the A. F. of L. had almost found themselves in prison eight years before for contempt of court in disobeying a court injunction, Ben Tillett of the British dockers wrote, pointing out that, for all English trade unions had suffered, they were not cursed with the Supreme Court, "... a form of judiciary a thousand years behind the times ... and now used to back up [American] money bugs." Gompers seemed to take Tillett's letter as a cue for solidarity among the workers of the world and immediately penned off a rather peevish letter to Carl Liegen in Germany saying that he "did rather expect some sort of a letter" on the subject. Gompers did answer Tillett, however, that he was confident that the principles for which they contended and for which they might have had to suffer would be "restored, maintained and permanently guaranteed." [16]

Gompers seems to have sincerely believed that the relief he sought was finally obtained by what he called Labor's Magna Carta – the 1914 Clayton Act – though his argument that it constituted "the most far-reaching declaration ever made by any government in the history of the world" sounds a little desperate. When one part of the Industrial Relations Commission's report suggested that the act might achieve nothing, Gompers wrote off an indignant letter to its Chairman, Frank P. Walsh, pointing out that this could encourage the enemies of labor. [17] The criticism of the Clayton Act was justified, however, for immediately after the war it was as much abused by the Supreme Court as the Sherman Act had been. With the A. F. of L. "faced with the most persistent aggressive opposition in its history," Gompers was still writing that "the power of the courts over legislation must be abolished and their powers of interpretation prescribed." "The justices of our state and Federal Supreme Courts," he told another correspondent in 1921, "are so far removed from those who toil that there comes from them no answering sympathy for the trials of those who work for wages. Their environment is composed of those who employ or who aid financially the great corporations of our country. Until these courts can be made human, until they will consider a question from the standpoint of what is good for humanity, they will continue to be dangerous to our free

[15] Gompers to John P. Meade, April 25, 1916.

[16] Ben Tillett to Gompers, December 26, 1908. Gompers to Carl Legien, January 22, 1909. Gompers to Ben Tillett, January 12, 1909.

[17] Gompers, "Editorial," *American Federationist*, XXVI, 1 (January, 1919), 43. Gompers to Frank P. Walsh, September 15, 1915.

institutions." So much for the Supreme Court, "nourished," according to Hartz, "by the liberal unanimity of the nation."[18]

In the face of court decisions which threatened the whole future of trade unionism, Gompers, for all his syndicalist mistrust of politics, had been forced, as he phrased it, "to secure legislation that would assure [the workers] their fundamental rights as free citizens." Yet, as he explained, "the position of these hostile employers was made almost invulnerable by their control in Congress and in the state legislatures." The situation in 1906-1908 had thus produced a sense of crisis throughout the labor world similar to that in England after Taff Vale. Some socialists, in fact, were encouraged to believe that a new class-based political party might be the result. Gompers had written to Ben Tillett in 1900 that while British trade unions could think of independent politics, the American trade union movement was still "in its swaddling clothes," and that "the element of stability" had not yet been reached. It was never to be reached in Gompers' eyes. Instead, the A. F. of L. under Gompers' tutelage adopted its so-called "non-partisan" political programme of "rewarding friends and punishing enemies" irrespective of party. In spite of a vague promise at the 1913 convention that when the present political activities had "suitably matured" a new political party would be the result, the non-partisan approach was steadfastly maintained. Even when a labor party finally got off the ground after the First World War, Gompers refused to participate. Only when his policy proved bankrupt in 1924, when both old parties ignored the A. F. of L.'s pleas, did Gompers reluctantly endorse La Follette's Progressive Movement, in which the Socialist Party also participated.[19]

What I have been suggesting is that a large part of Gompers' writings betray an outlook at variance with any kind of Hartzian consensus — an outlook containing something of the syndicalists' fear of political processes as a snare and delusion, but from which a class based party would seem to have been the logical conclusion once politics were admitted to be necessary. But, of course, there remains the basic problem of why Gompers in fact so obviously spent so much energy opposing third party politics in general and abusing the Socialist Party in particular.

One answer might be that, whatever his own analysis of American society, Gompers was astute enough to realize that class

[18] Gompers to John P. Frey, December 1, 1919. Statement entitled, "Labor and Democracy in the Election," dated 1920. Gompers to T. F. Compton, March 5, 1921. Hartz, 28.

[19] Gompers to John P. Meade, April 25, 1916. Gompers to Ben Tillett, June 28, 1900 (Samuel Gompers Copybooks). A. F. of L., *Proceedings 1913*, 314-315.

politics were totally alien to the American worker, and that his policies must be based accordingly. Perhaps Gompers was one of the few who recognized what Hartz calls "the same realities as confronted the European Liberal reformer: the irreversible rise of a proletariat, the irreversible inequity of the capitalist race," but understood the "irrational grip of Americanism." [20]

Still, there is something illogical about lamenting the impossibility of obtaining legislation through third parties, while at the same time using one's influence to much make such parties impossible. The British Labor Party did not appear overnight; it grew because men in Gompers' position worked for it. Presumably they worked for it because there were signs of growth. But were there no signs of growth in America?

There has of course been considerable debate on this subject over the past few years. Let me add a few points on the Gompers papers. Of course they contain innumerable statements concerning the unimportance of socialism and the impossibility of radical parties, but the extent to which Gompers was preoccupied with the subject, in articles and correspondence, tends to belie the insignificance of such questions in his own mind. Particularly interesting in this regard are the letters from Ralph Easley, written over a long period, describing steps taken by the Civic Federation to deal with the menace of socialism. These can at least testify that they believed there was something that had to be fought. [21]

Thus, if Gompers seemed aware of radical growth and at times held "non-consensus" views that would have made radical policies seem logical, his long battle with socialists and radicals cannot be explained along simple Hartzian lines. I submit that all kinds of personal factors influenced him: his psychological needs for an enemy which socialists seemed to fill; his paranoiac fears that anyone differing from him intended destroying the A. F. of L.; the extent to which any change in the status-quo along more socialistic industrial union lines might have threatened his own position. But more than any particular explanation, Gompers' policies have to be seen in the context of an unfolding sequence of events, rather than as inevitable responses to the American environment. [22]

[20] Hartz, 231.

[21] Ralph Easley to Gompers, August 19, 1907; September 18, 1913; e.g., September 21, 1914.

[22] See Rowland Hill Harvey, Samuel Gompers: *Champion of the Toiling Masses* (Stanford, 1935), 56. Max S. Hayes, "World of Labor," *International Socialist Review*, VII, 5 (November, 1906), 310-311. Mark Perlman, *Labor Union Theories in America* (Evanston, Ill., 1958), 106. Eva Valesh, Columbia University Oral History Project, 49.

His early disappointment after the Henry George campaign led to an anti-political, "syndicalist" stand, which his quarrel with DeLeon forced into an anti-socialist stand. Differences with socialists then became exaggerated, especially when his rather irrational attitude towards industrial unionism caused the appearance of rival movements. Of course, his muted syndicalism might easily become transformed under favorable circumstances into liberal voluntarism, and "respectability," brought by participation in war-time committees, with their concomitant anti-socialist patriotism, finally completed the transformation into the complete Hartzian consensus man. With the post-war reaction, however, the dream of consensus was shattered : Gompers died an embittered, frustrated man.

To conclude, although under Gompers' leadership, or lack of leadership, the A. F. of L. may have contributed to the growth of "business unionism" and so to the corroboration of Louis Hartz' analysis of the American past, the thought of the man as expressed in his writings is something much more complex, not to say self-contradictory. Perhaps it would be as well to leave it at that, but I believe I am in good company if I attempt to go further.

Under the brilliant pen of Louis Hartz, it seems that every key figure in the history of American political thought, for all his talk of class domination and exploitation, is made to reveal his subconscious but irrevokable attachment to Lockian liberalism. In the case of Samuel Gompers, I believe this process can be reversed. Gompers, too, understood the exploitation and class domination, very much in Marxian terms, but he also specifically expressed the desire to integrate the labor movement into the liberal tradition surviving from the pre-industrial past. The tension caused by these two opposing philosophies in the mind of someone so close to the centre of events created an irascible, frustrated personality. The paranoia so characteristic of his dealings with radicals, and the constant anti-socialist diatribes are perhaps a sub-conscious admission of the irrelevance of the liberal tradition in the America of his day.