

Convention of the Pan-American Federation of Labor

By Manuel Gomez, Secretary, All-American A-I-Imperialist League.

APPROPRIATELY enough, the fourth convention of William Green's "Pan-American Federation of Labor" is to meet in the same city where the Pan-American Commercial Conference held its sessions a few months earlier. The convention will open on July 18th in Washington, D. C., which in the minds of Latin-American workers is associated not with trade-unionism but with the Monroe Doctrine and American imperialistic aggression.

Herein we have the secret of the Gompers-Green foreign policy which explains why no bona fide working-class organization anywhere expects the gathering on July 18th to labor for the common cause of the wage workers of the Americas, and why the important trade unions of South America—believing though they do in international labor solidarity—will refuse to send delegates to this convention as they have in the past. It is a foreign policy taking its cue from the U. S. Department of State. Matthew Woll had the unmitigated gall to christen it openly as "the Monroe Doctrine of American labor" at the Mexico City convention of the P. A. F. of L., held in December, 1924. He gave utterance to the same formula at the Atlantic City convention of our own A. F. of L. Ignored Labor Struggles in Latin America

Two and-a-half years have passed since the last P. A. F. of L. assembly. During that time there have been big labor conflicts in Cuba, Mexico, Peru and Chile, all of them involving American capital; yet the American-controlled P. A. F. of L. has taken no supporting action whatever—except for a platonic statement by Chester Wright on the anti-union reign of terror in Cuba, placing the whole responsibility upon the Cuban government instead of declaring frankly that the latter is a subsidized tool of U. S. Ambassador Crowder and the Sugar Trust. Throughout the whole period of its existence the P. A. F. of L. has

failed to justify its name by initiating a single measure for practical trade-union co-operation in the Americas. Is it any wonder then that except for the C. R. O. M. of Mexico the so-called Pan-American Federation has remained virtually a paper organization in Latin America, without the affiliation of one important national trade union body in the West Indies or South America.

Supports Aggressions of American Imperialism

Our Latin-American brothers have far more serious reasons to be wary of the P. A. F. of L. than those indicated above. In the last two and a half years American imperialism has been more aggressive than ever in the lands to the south of us.

In the autumn of 1925 United States troops invaded the City of Panama and forcibly broke the strike of the Panama worker-tendants. At the same time deportations of native citizens—practically all workers—were carried on throughout Central America under U. S. inspiration. In 1926 violent conflict broke out in Peru where the Wall Street-controlled dictator had put through the infamous "Road-Building Conscription Act", under which the entire Peruvian working class is conscripted to work 12 days a year without pay, for the Wall Street-owned Foundation Co. In Chile, the American nitrate interests approved the exile and mass butchery of thousands of rebellious workers, members of the Labor Federation of Chile, because they wished to put into effect the labor provisions of the Chilean constitution. During this time the United States government was engaged in playing off Chile against Peru in the ill-starred Tacna-Arica adventure of American imperialism. Recent months have seen the cynical "postponement" of elections in Haiti, where Admiral Russell and his marines have been running things to suit themselves for years. In Panama the U. S. representative

has been trying to force the acceptance of another humiliating treaty, finally sealing the fate of that unhappy country as a protectorate of American imperialism.

What has the "Pan-American Federation of Labor" done in the face of all these outrages? Absolutely nothing. What has it said? Less than nothing; it has defended American imperialism.

These cases are only a few out of many. We need not review them all. But we cannot fail to recall the manifold aggressions against Mexico led by the U. S. oil, mining and banking lords in connection with Mexico's oil and land laws. The Mexican workers are affiliated to the P. A. F. of L., but M. Green's support was forthcoming only, in the most doubtful phrases—and when the Mexican government, backed by the trade unions, was struggling with the Catholic reaction, Green turned his guns upon our Mexican brothers, rendering direct aid to the reaction and to its American financial coadjutors.

Facing a Crisis

We can expect some of these matters to come up at the convention on July 18th, and the United States delegates will have to give an accounting. Even those Latin-American delegates who are hand-picked (with expenses paid) by the Green machine will have to voice the discontent of their fellow-workers at home if they do not want trouble when they get back.

The P. A. F. of L. is before a crisis which the imperialistic policy of President Green has brought upon it. The labor bureaucrats in Washington cannot go ahead much longer under the theory of "the Monroe Doctrine of American Labor". Among the few Latin-American labor federations affiliated to the P. A. F. of L. there has already been considerable talk of leaving it and turning their energies to the creation of a Latin-American Federation of Labor.

Must Fight American Imperialism
No international labor body is

worthy of support that does not struggle militantly in the interests of its affiliated sections. If the P. A. F. of L. hopes to accomplish anything it must change its course. American trade-unionists must exert pressure upon the A. F. of L. executive council (which is now running the P. A. F. of L.) to take concrete steps toward making the Pan-American Federation an instrument for serving the common ends of the workers of North, South, and Central America.

Scores of practical measures for trade-union co-operation might be suggested, and unquestionably will be suggested at the coming convention. But the root of the whole matter is the question of imperialism. The United States government sends its diplomatic and military agents into the various Latin-American countries to defeat native resistance to American Big Business interests, which are involved in nearly every important labor struggle on the southern continent.

This is an obvious fact, just as the use of police to break strikes in this country is obviously in the interests of Big Business. How, then, can the workers of the Americas look with unconcern upon the progressive march of American imperialism southward, to the detriment of wages, of working and living conditions, and of trade-unionism itself? If the P. A. F. of L. is to be worth saving it must be converted from the instrument of American imperialism which it now is, to an instrument against American imperialism.

Unfortunately the left wing of the labor movement in the United States will be powerless to serve this end at the July 18th convention, for the A. F. of L. delegates are appointed by President Green and the other reactionaries now in control of the executive council. Our hopes must therefore rest with the Latin-American delegations, for whose countries the struggle against imperialism is a matter of life and death.