

**THE DOUBLE EDGE OF LABOR'S  
SWORD; DISCUSSION AND TESTIMONY  
ON SOCIALISM AND TRADE-UNIONISM  
BEFORE THE COMMISSION ON  
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS**

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The double edge of labor's sword; discussion and testimony on socialism and trade-unionism before the Commission on Industrial Relations by Morris Hillquit & Samuel Gompers & Max J. Hayes

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**MORRIS HILLQUIT & SAMUEL GOMPERS & MAX J. HAYES**

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MORRIS HILLQUIT  
SAMUEL GOMPERS  
and MAX J. HAYES

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# CONTENTS

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	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	5
FIRST SESSION:	
Aims and Methods of the Socialist Movement . . . . .	9
SECOND SESSION:	
Socialist Attitude Towards Trade Unionism . . . . .	35
THIRD SESSION:	
The Aims and Methods of the American Federation of Labor . . . . .	86
FOURTH SESSION:	
The Conflicts between Capital and Labor . . . . .	133
FIFTH SESSION:	
Socialism and Trade-Unionism . . . . .	153
Why Victor Berger voted against that "Rider" to the Sundry Civil Bill . . . . .	191

## INTRODUCTION

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On the 23rd day of August, 1912, Congress passed an act creating a commission known as the Commission on Industrial Relations. The act provided among other things that "the Commission shall inquire into the general condition of labor in the principal industries of the United States, including agriculture, and especially those which are carried on in corporate forms; into existing relation between employers and employes \* \* \* into the growth of associations of employers and wage-earners and the effect of such associations upon the relations between employers and employes \* \* \* into any methods which have been tried in any state or in foreign countries for maintaining mutually satisfactory relations between employes and employers \* \* \*. *The Commission shall seek to discover the underlying causes of dissatisfaction in the industrial situation and report its conclusions thereon.*"

It was one of the most striking measures of modern legislation involving, as it did, an official recognition of the existence of a general and chronic industrial unrest and representing the first attempt at a general stock-taking of industrial conditions and relations in the United States.

The act specified that the Commission "shall be composed of nine persons, to be appointed by the President of the United States, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, not less than three of whom



shall be employers of labor and not less than three of whom shall be representatives of organized labor."

On June 26, 1913, President Wilson named the following persons as members of the Commissions. On the part of the public: Frank P. Walsh, a well-known lawyer of Kansas City, Missouri, to serve as President of the Commission; Professor John R. Commons, the noted sociologist of Madison, Wisconsin, and Mrs. J. Borden Harriman of New York. On the part of the employers: Frederick A. Delano, railway president of Chicago, Illinois; Harris Weinstock, merchant, author and social worker, of Sacramento, California, and S. Thurston Ballard, capitalist, of St. Louis, Missouri. On the part of organized labor: John B. Lennon and James O'Connell, both officers of the American Federation of Labor and Austin B. Garretson, President of the Order of Railway Conductors.

The Commission was given wide powers, including the power of holding public hearings in all parts of the United States and compelling the attendance of witnesses. It has held many interesting hearings and has brought to light much valuable information on the relations and struggles between the employing and the working classes in the United States. But the hearing which will probably remain most memorable in the annals of the American labor movement was that held in the City of New York on May 21, 22 and 23, 1914, and which had for its object the study of the aims, methods and mutual relations of the main divisions of organized labor. The Socialist Party, the American Federation of Labor, and the Industrial Workers of the World, were each requested to designate spokesmen for their respective organizations, and the representatives so chosen were as follows: For the Socialist Party—Morris Hillquit, Chairman of its National Committee; for the American Federation of Labor—Samuel Gompers, its President; for the In-

dustrial Workers of the World—Vincent St. John, its Secretary-Treasurer. Additional witnesses at the hearing were: Max S. Hayes, a prominent member of the Socialist Party as well as of the American Federation of Labor; Mr. Joseph Ettore, a representative of the Industrial Workers of the World, and Mr. F. G. R. Gordon, a former Socialist, who appeared at the hearing in behalf of the American Federation of Labor. Mr. Gordon's "testimony" was brief and had practically no relation to the subject under discussion. The testimony of Vincent St. John and Joseph Ettore was entirely confined to the aims and methods of the Industrial Workers of the World, and contributed little, if anything, to the study of the mutual relations between Socialism and trade unionism in the United States. These relations were treated by Messrs. Hillquit, Gompers and Hayes, and their "testimony" represents the most exhaustive discussion of the subject ever published. For the first time authoritative spokesmen of the two great divisions of the American labor movement, the political and the economic, met face to face under official auspices to compare their views, aims and methods. No limits were set by the Commission; the "witnesses" spoke frankly and freely, without restraint or reserve. The proceedings were particularly enlivened by the mutual cross-examination of Messrs. Hillquit and Gompers, which occupied the better part of the hearing and held the audience in unabated, almost spell-bound attention from start to finish. It was not a hostile encounter, nor was it purely a battle of wits. On the whole it was an earnest search for the truth punctured now and then by good-natured mutual thrusts. Mr. Samuel Gompers, as one of the most typical representatives of the old-line, pure-and-simple trade unionists attempted to disclaim any connection, physical or spiritual, between the trade union movement and the Socialist movement, between the economic and the

political organizations of the workers. Mr. Morris Hillquit, taking the official stand of the Socialist Party, endeavored to prove the identity of aims and interests of both divisions of the labor movement, and the necessity of their mutual co-operation on the fields of political as well as economic battle. The numerous involuntary concessions made by Mr. Gompers on his cross-examination are among the most amusing and significant features of the discussion.

The succeeding pages contain a stenographic account of the "testimony" and cross-examination of Messrs. Hillquit, Gompers and Hayes. A number of insignificant corrections have been necessitated by stenographer's errors and by occasional lapses or loose wording of statements on the part of witnesses. But these corrections are purely verbal. The publishers have been careful to preserve the form as well as the spirit and substance of the discussion without adding or subtracting anything and with all the directness and spontaneity with which it was presented before the Commission.

It is the sincere conviction of the publishers that the reading of this unique discussion will contribute materially to a better understanding between the Socialists and the trade unionists of the country, and this booklet is published for the equal benefit of both.

New York, September, 1914.