

40,000 CALLED OUT IN WOMEN'S STRIKE

Makers of Shirtwaists Vote to
Quit Work After Hearing
Gompers Speak.

MORE PAY; SHORTER HOURS

Cooper Union Filled with Cheering
Throng—Strike Order Goes Into
Effect Here To-day.

After hearing Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor, deliver an address in Cooper Union last night the audience of shirtwaist-makers which filled the hall voted to go on strike. A similar vote, also in favor of the strike, was taken in four other halls.

The auditorium was well filled, and hundreds stood outside, striving to gain admittance. B. Finegbeim of Vorwaerts presided. He spoke in Yiddish. Mr. Gompers said in part:

"When I was asked by Mrs. Raymond Robins to come and speak to the shirtwaist makers I said, 'I don't know whether the courts will allow me to be in New York, but if they permit I will be there,' and here I am." [Cheers.]

There came a flash set off by a photographer, which startled some in the crowd.

"That is the first bomb in the strike," remarked Mr. Gompers, "and I hope and believe it will be the last."

Referring to some newspaper clippings, Mr. Gompers said that he had been referred to in them as "Gompers the strike-maker" and "Gompers to declare general strike."

"As a matter of fact," he continued, "Gompers has never declared a strike in his life. I have taken my part in several, and so long as there is injustice in the industrial situation I will take part in strikes. I have done my share to avoid strikes, I have advised men and women against strikes, but there comes a time when to refuse to strike is to be as slaves."

The conditions in the clothing trade, declared Mr. Gompers, were a blot on modern civilization as he knew through investigation. The clothing trade with its tenement house work, he said, and work under unsanitary conditions breaks the spirit of men and women, and makes children prematurely old.

"Mr. Shirtwaist Maker may be inconvenienced and his profits may be diminished if you girls and boys go on strike," he went on. "And, mind you, I do not know whether a strike is necessary in this case, but there is something greater than the convenience or the profits of Mr. Shirtwaist Maker at stake—there are the lives and the future of the men and women engaged in this work. You seem to be aroused now to your interests. It is time, more than time. I am only sorry that you did not organize long ago."

"This is the time, and if you let this occasion go by it may be generations before you again get the opportunity to improve your conditions."

He told them not to enter into a strike too hastily, but when they found that the conditions were such that they could not obtain measurable relief from present conditions, better pay, better and shorter hours, he would say to them as calmly as he could "Strike!" and when they did strike to let the manufacturers know that they were on strike.

After an appeal by W. A. Coakley for organization, the Chairman read a resolution declaring that the shirtwaist makers, including the operators, finishers, buttonhole makers, and all other workers on shirtwaists except the cutters, who have their own organization, should declare a general strike. This was received with cheers, and when the Chairman asked whether all understood the conditions for which they struck, the reply was overwhelmingly in the affirmative.

The audience stood waving American flags and shouting.

B. Witaskin, organizer of the Ladies' Waist-Makers' Union, declared that the members included some 17,000 to 18,000 in number, of whom 70 per cent. were women. He expected that fully 40,000 would go on strike to-day.

The demands of the strikers, he said, were as follows: First, recognition of the union; second, increase of wages from 25 to 30 per cent over the present rates of \$10 to \$12 a week; third, fifty-two hours to be a full week's work instead of 54 and 57 as at present.

About 250 shops throughout the city would be affected, he said, and several are already negotiating to effect a settlement in accordance with the demands of the strikers.