

Example of research paper on samuel gompers

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Samuel Gompers is one of the most renowned labor union leaders in the American history. He was born in London in the year 1850 to a family of Jewish heritage. He however immigrated to the United States at the age of thirteen. It is in New York that he took over his father's cigar making trade and became a naturalized citizen in the year 1872. He was an astute debater in his youth a quality that endeared him to many of his peers. This quality would provide and guide his practical public speaking experience as well as parliamentary participation. The debate club propelled him to higher heights linking him to other upcoming young youthful members of the Cigar makers Local Union. His debating prowess enabled him to interact with the likes of Thomas Hughes, a British Member of Parliament, and A. Mundella, a Nottingham manufacturer. The encounter with the two liberal public figures changed his perception of the trade unions and their role and responsibilities. The union was defunct then, weak and in dire need of aggressive leadership, which Gompers would later on provide (Hamilton, 2002).

At a tender age of 17, he married Sophia Julian, his fellow co-worker. The two were blessed with six children. In the year 1873, he moved to a new firm, David Hirsch & Company that was known for employing only highly skilled laborers. The change of workplaces further opened Gompers's eyes to the labor rights. He interacted with German socialists at David Hirsch & Company who shared his perception on politics and labor rights. His admiration for the German co-workers saw him learn German and absorb their liberal ideas (Parish, 2013). He would later on interact with Karl Laurrell, the former secretary of the International Workingmen's Association. Karl

Laurrell incorporated Gompers into his team pushing him to support organized trade union movements rather than socialist political factions (Barkan, 2001).

In 1875, Gompers was elected unanimously as the Cigarmakers' International Union Local 144 president. Two years later the union like other unions of their time collapsed due to the 1877 financial crisis. This was coupled by increased unemployment levels and desperation of workers willing to work for poor subsistence wages. This put pressure to the gains achieved by the union in reducing the working hours and wage gains. These problems pushed Gompers into action. He facilitated the rebuilding of the union to incorporate a high-due framework and the implementation of labor welfare programs such as sick benefits, work benefits, and death benefits. The 1877 financial crisis precipitated Gompers call to all the workers to organize themselves into a movement that would prevail on the employers to factor in their demands. The employers were depicted as the capitalists united against the isolated workers that did not understand their rights and responsibilities. Gompers oratory skills was enough to influence many cigarmakers into the Cigarmakers International Union, a single representative union. Each Cigar shop across the vast New York City had its own union chapter with elected representatives that would sit in the larger union council. It was governed by a constitution that integrated democratic ideals (Barkan, 2001). The formation and the organization of the Cigarmakers' Union was the origin of the vibrant American labor movement. In 1881, Gompers helped in the creation of the Federation of Organized Traders and Labor Unions (FOTL). This was meant to be a coalition of unions

that shared in the same union philosophies. This alliance had members across United States and Canada. This union actively met annually in the national and local labor councils. The body trained its efforts on empowering the workers with information on their rights, pushing for labor legislation and pressures the congress to pass such bills and laws. Gompers was an active officer in the FOTL for a record of five years. In that duration, he managed to oversee various measures to improve the conditions of the workers and children. These measures included to reduce the working hours to eight, reduction of child labor and prioritization of the children education. He would soon realize that FOTL lacked the financial capacity and power to implement these measures to the satisfaction of its members. This body would later be reorganized and restructured into the American Federation of Labor in 1886. Gompers consequently was elected as the first president of the American Federation of Labor. It was through his leadership that the organization gained power and popularity across America ultimately undermining the position that was previously held by the Knights of Labor. Knights of Labor was one of the previous powerful American Labor organizations in the late 18th century. He held the presidential office for over thirty-eight years until his demise. By the year 1890, the A. F. L had a representation of over two hundred and fifty thousand workers drawn from various industries across North America. This number soared to more than one million in subsequent two years. His charismatic and focused leadership transformed the American Federation of Labor from a collection of a number of struggling labor unions into a major organization that influenced the labor movement in the United States and North America as a whole (Hamilton, 2002).

Samuel Gompers through his influence managed to wade through policy issues and foreign affairs. He was instrumental in expanding the labor movement through increasing the number of AFL branches. Gompers also funded the Canadian affiliates in order to ensure that they ran effectively as they managed the worker's affairs. On foreign affairs, he was an active anti-imperialism crusader that opposed President William McKinley's Philippines annexation plans (Barkan, 2001). He also opposed the unrestricted immigration policies that would have seen the influx of Europeans in United States. The aliens, in his opinion, presented opportunity for the corporate to introduce low wage rates an issue that he had fought virtually all his life as a trade unionist. He also strongly supported the creation of strict immigration bills such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1924, which set him on a collision course with many corporate heads that were in favor of eased immigration. The unionist was also actively involved in the American politics as he sought to protect the workers' interests. He had on and off relationship with the two main parties- Republican and Democratic parties depending on their manifestos and plans for the American workers (Hamilton, 2002). He was also able to act as the United States' ambassador from time to time in various international forums such as the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. Samuel Gompers passed on February 1923 and was buried in Sleepy Hollow, New York next to Andrew Carnegie, a celebrated American industrialist. Gompers left a legacy that has continued to inspire and influence subsequent generations of trade unionists. He embodied the true American spirit and dream (Hamilton, 2002). He came in America as a European immigrant but pioneered the American brand of labor unionism. His strong

belief in collective bargaining and labor-management contracts is actively in use even today. He awakened the American workforce to the reality that they had the power to achieve their demands within the United States democratic space.

References

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