Samuel Gompers was the first and longest-serving president of the American Federation of Labor (AFL); it is to him that the American labor movement owes its structure and characteristic strategies. Under his leadership, the AFL became the largest and most influential labor federation in the world. It grew from a marginal association of 50,000 in 1886 to an established organization of nearly 3 million in 1924 that had won a permanent place in American society.

Born in 1850 into a Jewish family in London, Gompers began making cigars alongside his father at the age of 10. In 1863, the entire family immigrated to New York City. Settling into a tenement apartment on Houston Street, Gompers continued rolling cigars at home with his father until he found work in one of the local shops.

In 1875, Gompers was elected president of the reorganized Local 144 of the Cigar Makers' International Union (CMIU) in NYC, a post he held from 1875 to 1878 and again from 1880 to 1886. He then served as second vice president of the CMIU from 1886 to 1896. In the 1880s, Gompers was also instrumental in establishing the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions, which he served as vice president from 1881 to 1886. When the FOTLU reorganized in 1886 as the American Federation of Labor (AFL), Gompers was elected its first president, a position he held for nearly 40 years.

As a local and national labor leader, Gompers sought to build the labor movement into a force powerful enough to transform the economic, social and political status of America's workers. When political action was necessary, as Gompers increasingly came to believe in his later years, he urged labor to follow a course of “political nonpartisanship.”

With his election as president of the AFL in 1886, Gompers sought to build a national federation of trade unions and immediately threw himself into the organization's first big effort—a nationwide general strike in May 1886—in support of an eight-hour workday.

Gompers, who also served in the administration of President Woodrow Wilson, died in December 1924 in San Antonio, Texas.
This Month's Trivia

1. This term was coined for the rich industrialists who dominated American politics in the Gilded Age--
   a. Robber Barons  b. Monopolists  c. The Gang of Four

2. This man, although he started with a Cigar Makers Union, eventually founded the AFL--

3. This man controlled 90% of all oil refined in the U.S.--

4. This banker is famous for financing the U.S. Steel Corporation--
   a. Andrew Carnegie  b. J. P. Morgan  c. George Pullman

5. This railroad tycoon was famous for building towns for his workers which were highly regulated.
   a. George Pullman  b. Andrew Carnegie  c. J. P. Morgan

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Laugh A Little

40th Anniversary Gift

Sid and Barbara were celebrating their 40th anniversary, and Sid wanted to get Barbara a special gift. “Would you like a diamond bracelet?” he asked. “No, thank you,” came the reply.

“How about a cruise to Alaska?” “I don’t think so,” answered Barbara.

“Can I get you some new furniture?” “That’s nice of you, but no.”

“Well, what did you have in mind, then?” asked Sid. “Actually, I want a divorce!” stated Barbara.

“OY!! I wasn’t planning to spend THAT MUCH!”

Answers to Test Your Vocabulary: 1. c  2. a  3. a  4. b  5. b  6. b

Answers to Labor Leader Trivia: 1. a  2. b  3. c  4. b  5. a

FYI - If you always ask for the same type of menu change, you can request a “Standing Order” instead of calling the office each time. For example, if you don’t wish to eat any hot meal of beef, you can request a “Standing Order” to substitute roast chicken any time beef comes up on the menu.

AS A REMINDER, please call in all same-day requests for pick-up by 9 AM at the latest. Also, you must wait until 12 PM or later, after we have finished dispatching the meals, to pick up your order.

*excerpted from Jokes4us.com

FYI—KMOW ANNUAL SURVEY

Our KMOW Annual Satisfaction Surveys were distributed last month. This is your chance to express what you do/don’t like about the Kosher Meals on Wheels (KMOW) program. Please complete the survey, and either return it to the volunteer who delivers your meals, or mail it back to Sara Ullman at the Milltown office-- 32 Ford Avenue, 2nd Floor, Milltown NJ 08850.