
Report on the United States: From May 10 to July 25, 1923. [Selections]

by Israel Amter

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(There has been very poor newspaper service during this period. No capitalist papers have arrived, so that the reporter has been dependent on the Party paper, the Socialist daily, and another weekly.)

GENERAL SITUATION

Economic Situation.

The peak of prosperity seems to have been reached. Although steel production continues at the record figure of 3,867,694 tons in the month of May, which means 45,750,000 tons a year, still the amount of unfilled orders decreased by 300,000 tons. The building boom, which was to have reached the figure of \$8 billion, has stopped. It was clear that a great deal of this extension work was pure speculation. Already bankers are warning the country to be cautious in investment and in laying in stocks of goods. Even though there are voices against this "pessimistic" attitude, there is no doubt that there will be a gradual decline during the next months.

The farming situation is serious. The farmers are trying to find a market for 170 million bushels of wheat, which can not be marketed in America. The rising competition of Argentina and Canada and particularly the fear of competition of Soviet Russia is causing almost a panic in the US. Furthermore, the wheat market had a sudden fall, wheat declining to 95¢ a bushel, which means bankruptcy for the farmers.

For the first time in years, in the month of March imports exceeded exports. This situation continued through April and May. The effect of this situation on domestic production is obvious. Three banks with a

capital of about \$20 million failed during this period.

Political Situation.

The politicians are looking forward to the elections of next year. Harding is making a tour, using as his main themes the World Court and the railroads. There has been a rift in the leadership of the Republican Party on the question of the World Court, the manager of the Party demanding that the World Court be completely dissociated from the League of Nations. Harding has accepted this compromise, so that, at least as far as appearances go, America will enter the World Court only if it is disconnected from the League.

The question of the presidential candidates is attracting great attention. [Sen. William E.] Borah has announced that he will have nothing to do with a Third Party. It is evident that he is steering toward the Republican nomination. The continued defeat of the Republican Party — in Minnesota, during the month of July, when a Farmer-Laborite was elected — demonstrates that the Republican Party will have to accept a different candidate than Harding if it is not to be defeated at the next election. Borah is playing the game — and is an acceptable candidate.

The Democrats, on the other hand, are having difficulty finding a suitable man. Their difficulty is so great that even [Henry] Ford is being proposed. The control of the Democratic Party — [J.P.] Morgan — makes it impossible for Ford to be the Democratic candidate since, as already explained in these reports, Ford combats Wall St. and is fought by them.

The question of a third party found its expression in the conference of the Farmer-Labor Party in Chicago, which resulted in a split, the Communists

remaining to form a "Federated Farmer-Labor Party" with a section of the convention.

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Labor Situation.

Wages continue to remain at the high-water mark. The average in the state of New York in May was \$27.63 [per week]. In May there were 287 wage increases, no decreases. Employment declined in the state of New York about 1%, but increased for the whole country 0.3%. There are 104.7 persons registered for every job open.

There has been a flood of strikes, involving hundreds of thousands of men. Demands have been for wage increases and lower hours. Almost all the strikes were won, some within a few days, others taking weeks. Trades involved have been building workers, needle trades, miners, shoe workers, food workers, phone operators.

The miners (anthracite) are negotiating a new agreement with the employers, to take effect on Aug. 31. There is no sign as to whether an agreement will be reached or another strike started. Trainmen and conductors are about to make demands for raised pay.

The labor situation has been dominated by the work of the Workers Party and the Trade Union Educational League. A militant fight has been started by the Party in the coal, steel, needle, food, and shoe industries. A widespread campaign was conducted for the formation of a "Federated Farmer-Labor Party," a conference for which was held in Chicago on July 3.

The Party has started a fight for ending the 12 hour day in the steel industry. It will culminate in an organization campaign for lining up the 500,000 workers in the steel industry. A Progressive Miners committee has been formed to get control of the Miners' Union. Adopting defiant resolutions at its conference in Pittsburgh, the Committee called forth the anger of Lewis, President of the United Mine Workers, who has threatened all adherents of the Committee and the Trade Union Educational League with expulsion from the Miners Union.

The Seattle Central Labor Council has long been a supporter of Soviet Russia. For this and other "offenses," it has been threatened with expulsion from

the American Federation of Labor. The Seattle Council answered Gompers' threat by a statement which will retain it its membership in the AF of L for the time being.

The Pennsylvania convention of the United Mine Workers, representing 150,000 miners, presented a riotous scene. Two Party members, not delegates, were thrown out and beaten up. A third was ejected from the hall. The President of the Pennsylvania district, who was recently elected with the aid of our organization, turned traitor at the convention....

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Open Shop.

At the Bankers Convention in New York, an issue was made of the open shop. There is no doubt that an open shop campaign will soon start again, particularly when there is a decline in prosperity. Gen. Dawes, who is traveling about the country organizing the "Minute Men," a new fascist organization, has called upon the Republican Party and Harding to make the open shop an issue of the coming campaign. Editors are reluctant about making it a slogan of the coming election, and especially advise against raising it now, when there is such a demand for labor. The bosses are trying to enlist the sympathy of the "public" in this campaign, pointing out that the closed shop means higher cost of production, which the public must stand.

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Workers Party.

The Executive Council of the Party met on June 21. The Council discussed the policy adopted by the Party in regard to the Federated Farmer-Labor Party and approved it. The question of the removal of Party headquarters again considered, but it was decided to reject the proposal to remove to Chicago. The campaign for the daily paper is to begin about July 1 [1923], with the object of publishing the paper on Nov. 7.

The Central Executive Committee is considering the question of reorganization of its work. At present it has a Secretariat, Political Committee, Organization Committee, Editorial Committee, and In-

dustrial Committee. The idea proposed is to have only two committees — a Political and an Organization Committee. The matter is to be studied further. The Executive Council also considered the question of Soviet Russia relief and decided that it must be continued but should not take the Party members from the more important work before the organization.

Federated Farmer-Labor Party.

This has been one of the major campaigns of the Party since the call was issued by the Farmer-Labor Party for the immediate formation of a party. The conference took place in Chicago on July 3 and was attended by delegates representing 600,000 to 700,000 workers and farmers (reports of the conference are not yet at hand). The Party press and the membership made a full campaign of it. Meetings were held in all cents. Resolutions were introduced in the unions and other workers' organizations. The pamphlet *For a Labor Party* was issued in a second edition. Leaflets were issued. In Chicago, a United Front conference for the formation of a Farmer-Labor Party was started. There is no question that the Workers Party was the main protagonist of the new party — which drew the attention of the capitalist press and the anger of Gompers and the reactionary officials of the AF of L. A vicious campaign began against the Workers Party and the Trade Union Educational League, which found its expression in various ways (which will be described later on).

The conference was also well prepared by the Farmer-Laborites. Two large State Federations of Labor had endorsed an independent Labor Party — the State Federations of Labor of Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Numerous local central labor bodies and large internationals had advocated it for some time.

There was a large element, however, that refused to participate in the conference. The yellow trade union leaders, whose organizations were represented at the conference in December [Conference for Progressive Political Action], not only refused to send delegates, but stated — among them [William H.] Johnston of the Machinists Union, chairman of the December Conference — that they were against a Labor Party. These men have been flirting with LaFollette and have become completely subservient to him. (There seems no doubt that they believe that either LaFollette or

Borah may be a Presidential candidate and will support either one of them on a Republican ticket.)

The Socialists also refused to send delegates to the conference, even though they had been glowing proponents of a Labor Party. They decided to adhere to the Conference for Progressive Political Action (the December Conference) and proceed with the organization of local and state Labor Parties. One of the reasons they gave was that they Chicago Conference would not represent organized labor. This was the same reason as was given by a member of the Workers Party [J.B. Salutsky], who refused to accept party discipline at the December Conference and is half way outside the Party at the present time. He also stated that the conference should not decide in favor of a Labor Party since the large organizations are not affiliated, and that until Gompers is willing to bring over the whole AF of L, no attempt should be made to launch a Labor Party.

The Socialists further said that they would not be in one party with the Workers Party, since the communists are merely disrupters and nothing constructing could result with us in. The Secretary of the Farmer-Labor Party [Joseph Manley] exposed them for their hypocrisy.

Gompers and Seattle.

The Seattle Central Labor Council is one of the most progressive in the country. It has supported Soviet Russia from the beginning and has been especially helpful in the relief campaign. Seattle has sent a delegate to the two congresses of the Profintern. This has aroused the anger of Gompers, who sent them an ultimatum. He put up six points and demanded an answer. The answer was conciliatory although the statement of the Seattle leaders was firm. Gompers threatened them with expulsion if they repeated the offense.

Nova Scotia.

The Nova Scotia district of the United Mine Workers has declared itself in favor of the Profintern. It was restrained from affiliation by the threat of Lewis, President of the United Mine Workers, to expel them. They have persisted in their sympathy with the Profintern and declare they will bring up the matter

before the annual convention of the miners, which takes place in January. All of Lewis' threats have been repelled by these splendid fighters. These miners are among the best supporters of the Trade Union Educational League.

Progressive Miners Committee.

The Progressive Miners Relief Committee (a TUEL organization) called a conference in Pittsburgh on June 3. This conference represented all the progressive elements in the Pennsylvania coal fields and had as its object the organization of the Left Wing in the United Miners. It was a most successful conference. It was attended by [Alexander] Howat, the Kansas mine leader, and Dorchy, the Kansas district leader. [William Z.] Foster made a speech and the conference endorsed Soviet Russia, condemned the twelve-hour day, and endorsed the campaign to put an end to it, asked for united action of the miners and railroaders, and endorsed a Labor party. It was a most enthusiastic conference and boded ill for Lewis and the yellows.

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District Convention, United Miners of Pennsylvania.

This convention took place at Scranton, Pa., on June 27 [1923], and was attended by Lewis, who sensed the danger he was in. Something had happened between the date of the elections and the convention. For the leader who had been elected by the progressives, Capillini — a young Italian — turned against the progressives and denounced the Workers Party. He practically repudiated Howat, with whom he had made speeches during the election campaign. Evidently he had been coerced by Lewis and betrayed the workers who elected him to power.

Lewis denounced the Communists and the Trade Union Educational League, saying that they were agents of Moscow and had received \$7 million for their work. Two comrades, who were sitting in the gallery, were ejected and beaten up and a third one thrown out.

Lewis announced that the Trade Union Educational Society is a dual organization and all members

will be expelled from the United Miners, which does not tolerate "dual unionism." This he stated in spite of the insistent campaign of the TUEL against dual unionism. The purpose is clear: Lewis is afraid of the gathering storm and wishes to get rid of the forces that are being organized against him.

The accumulation of all these forces preceded the Chicago conference for the formation of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party. The threats of Gompers and Lewis, supported by the capitalists who are afraid of the formation of a Labor Party, evidently had their effect on the conference. A split occurred there — the origin of which is not definite at the present time. (It would appear from Russian papers, however, that the Workers Party got the lead early in the convention — which would have been a tactical mistake. It would appear, however, that the question of individual membership in the new party was becoming an issue, since an article by [John] Pepper stressed that there could be no individual membership, but only of organizations and that the discipline of the Labor Party would be accepted only for action. The Minnesota Daily Star, organ of the Minnesota section of the Farmer-Labor party, declared in an editorial that Communists would be welcome in the new Federated Farmer-Labor Party only as individuals; that the new Party would not tolerate them as an organization. From the meager reports that have appeared in the Russian papers, it appears that the WP did not heed the opposition that was in the conference — perhaps even opposition to the formation of a party at that time. Evidently carried away by its enthusiasm that it evoked among a certain portion of the delegates, it assumed the leadership of the conference and frightened the Farmer-Laborites. Fitzpatrick, of the Chicago Federation of Labor, and Nockles of the same organization, as well as two other leaders of the Farmer-Laborites, good friends of Foster, declared that they would not accept the "dictates of Moscow." These words were either an echo of Lewis' statements or must have been provoked by occurrences at the conference. The Chicago Federation of Labor was the first supporter of Soviet Russia and of the comrades indicted in Michigan.)

A split occurred in the conference. The major section of the Farmer-Laborites and part of the farmers left. Conflicting reports regarding the number of delegates who remained and the bodies of workers and

farmers they represent have appeared. It would seem, however, that the minority of the delegates, representing the minority of the workers and farmers, remained with the WP, who proceeded to form a Federated Farmer-Labor Party.

Trade Union Educational League.

As indicated above, the TUEL has been doing yeoman work among the miners. The program of the Progressive Miners Committee was endorsed by the progressives in the Ohio coal fields. The TUEL has done excellent work among the needle, shoe, food, marine, and textile workers. It has formed a Committee of Action with the Independents and the IWW. The danger of trouble with the Independents has been averted and all elements are working in complete harmony. The TUEL is preparing for the convention of the AF of L, which takes place in September [1923], and of the Mine Workers, which takes place in January of next year. Undoubtedly these two places will be a test of power. At both places, probably a ban will be issued against the TUEL and its supporters. A clean line has been drawn and the fight will become intense.

Socialist Convention.

The Socialist Convention took place on May 20 [1923]. It was a small convention, and was packed with Eastern delegates. All the delegates were of the "old guard," the average age being 48 years. It began with a riotous attack on Soviet Russia by that malicious menshevik and enemy of Soviet Russia, [Abraham] Cahan, editor of the Jewish Daily Forward. It was such a wild attack that the delegates were dumbfounded. One of them demanded that his speech be strike from the record, but the motion was tabled. The convention adopted a resolution in support of Soviet Russia, but it was one of those platonic resolutions that mean nothing. (Cahan later repeated the attacks in the *New York Call*.) Debs did not speak at the convention, but was merely an ornament.

The Party claims to have a membership of 12,000, which is very doubtful. Unquestionably since Debs has been on tour, there has been a growth in the membership. But it is membership that comes out of enthusiasm for Debs and disappears as soon as he

leaves. Debs was elected Chairman of the party, even though he stands in opposition to many of its positions, as, for instance, on industrial unionism, Soviet Russia, a Labor Party with the Workers Party in it, etc.

The further ideological decline of the SP is manifest in the Rand School, their party school being taken over by the Central Trade and Labor Council of New York as a trade union school.

IWW.

The IWW, it has been established, has a membership of 38,000. It is composed of four bona fide unions — lumber workers, agricultural workers, marine transport workers, and general construction workers — with a membership of 36,000. There are 20 other so-called unions, which have only 1900 members. The Party will support the first four named unions, since they are the only mass organizations in the industries. The others, the Party maintains, must be absorbed into the mass organization of the AF of L, etc. This line of policy, as well as all the other policies of the TUEL, have been approved by the Profintern.

Socialist Labor Party and Proletarian Party.

These two small sects refused to have anything to do with the Labor Party. The former assured the world that somehow, somewhere the workers of America would at last recognize the SLP is the true revolutionary party. The Proletarians are conducting a polemic against the Party, maintaining its Communist purity as against the "opportunism" of the WP.

Technical Aid Society.

This Society had its convention in June and adopted resolutions in conformity with the decisions of the Comintern and the STO [Council of Labor and Defense, the central coordinating agency of Soviet economic planning during this period]. At the insistence of this reporter, the STO sent a message to the convention, which was adopted unanimously. The report of the comrade who came to Soviet Russia was repudiated. The comrade attacked the CEC, in which he received no support whatever. A new Bureau has been

ected, which has the support of the membership of the Technical Aid and of the Party. The new Bureau is made up of loyal members.

The former secretary has been expelled from the Party for forgery of documents, misrepresentation, and attempts at bribery. Another comrade in connection with the Technical Aid has also been expelled — he resigned prior to his expulsion.

Young Workers League.

The Young Workers League held their convention in June, which was very successful. A representative of the Executive Committee of the YCI [Young Communis International] was present and gave a realistic direction to the work to be undertaken by the League during the coming year. He reports that the League is made up of good material, but has been lacking in realistic leadership. The League has failed to issue realistic slogans and raise practical issues. The League is being organized on a factory basis, which will bring it in contact with the working youth.

One of the first acts of the new Executive was to send a letter to Gompers demanding action in protection of Child Labor. Gompers held a session with a delegation of the League, in which he made no promises, but rather catechized the young comrades. Nevertheless, this is the first occasion that Gompers had taken to meet Communists.

The League has 2,000 members, and has an organizer in the field. There were two delegates to the Bureau session of the YCI.

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Ruthenberg Trial.

Ruthenberg appeared in court on June 4 to be sentenced. He appealed the case; decision will be rendered in September. In the meantime, the five comrades who were to be deported will remain out on bail, the decision in their cases depending on the verdict in the Ruthenberg case. Foster is to make a trip to the Western Coast to raise funds for the defense. The defense has already cost nearly \$80,000, which has meant a terrible drain on the Party resources.

Release of Class War Prisoners.

Of the 52 class war prisoners still in American prisons, 27 were released conditionally. Of this number 10 remained in prison, refusing to accept any condition. The majority of those remaining in prison have 5 year terms which will soon expire. One has a 15 year term and went back to jail. The released men had to promise to be "law-abiding and loyal to the government of the United States." Among the men who accepted the parole was a party member. Seven are to be deported.

The release of these men is due in great part to the campaign carried on by state governors, US Senators, etc.

Upton Sinclair was arrested in California for attempting to read the Constitution of the US against the proscription of a sheriff. The case stirred up considerable noise. His arrest brought forth a protest from the Internationale Arbeiterhilfe, who sent a cable to Washington. As a result, the office of the "Friends of Soviet Russia" (relief organization for Soviet Russia) was seized and searched. The comrades working in the office were arrested and held for two days and held for the Grand Jury. Details have not been forwarded. Sinclair was released and held for trial.

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Ku Klux Klan and Fascisti.

The Ku Klux Klan are openly organizing and openly holding their initiation ceremonies. Although the state of New York enacted a law calling for the registration of the membership of secret societies, the Ku Klux Klan refuses to submit the names of its members. It allows photographs to be taken of the initiations, at which some of the members are not disguised. The organization claims a membership of 3 million. The Klan asserts that "the Americanism of the KKK is ideal and as such must be adhered to and forced into general recognition just as Benito Mussolini's Fascisti grew to be the Italian law by destroying opposition rule."

The Fascisti are openly organizing in the US. An Italian agent has been assigned to New Orleans to organize the southern section of the country. The Anti-

Fascisti organization formed by the Workers Party has been endorsed by many trade unions. The Italian weekly is regarded as the official paper of the Anti-Fascisti, and it is hoped that in the near future that it may become a daily.

Registering Aliens.

Secretary of Labor Davis contemplates introducing a bill during the next session [of Congress] for the registering of aliens. The bill would require the photographing, registering, and periodical reporting at police headquarters of all aliens, whose naturalization papers might be revoked upon failure to comply with the requirements. Aliens might also be deported, if considered “undesirable.”

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