

Political Progress in the United States

By Israel Amter.

The political life of the United States is passing through a remarkable development. Although from the very establishment of the republic the capitalists, the big landowners and manufacturers have understood how to guide the affairs of the country—to their own interests, even though they made some superficial concessions to “democracy”—groups are forming representing other interests and made up of men determined to fight.

The country has been trained to an understanding of the “necessity” of politicians and statesmen changing their position—“according to circumstances”. From Wilson’s “keeping us out of war” to his getting us in up to our necks; from his visit to Versailles where he intended to put the United States into the League of Nations; from his defeat by the Republicans who despised American interference in European affairs, to the gradual relinquishing of this position by staunch Republicans who are demanding American intervention because “conditions have changed etc., etc.”—through these stages of shifting, of duplicity and capitalist manoeuvring, the American people has got used to any position that the government happens to take.

But as already stated, there are groups forming that look to their own self-interests. The most remarkable of these groups is the Farmer group. The position of the American farmer is very bad. In the decade from 1910 to 1920, the farm mortgage debt increased from about \$726,000,000 to more than \$4,000,000,000. During this period the World War took place, which brought prosperity to the country, but left the farmer out in the cold. During the war, prices presumably were regulated, but the farmer received little of the higher prices that the people had to pay. The speculators made tremendous profits, while the farmers’ debts piled up.

During and since the war, the railroads have demanded higher freight rates. This put a further obstacle in the way of the farmers. The war demanded high production—and the farmers did their share. After the war when “deflation” set in, when Europe was unable to buy and when a general state of uncertainty arose, the production dropped to less than half of that of the war period. The unemployment of 1921 almost drove the farmers to bankruptcy. Industrial production reached one of the lowest levels in the modern history of America. The farmers were hard hit. Their sons left the farms to seek some occupation in the city. The crop of 1921 could not be disposed of even in 1922.

During this period when the farmers were making frantic efforts to maintain themselves, the government declared itself in no position to help them. There was plenty of money for the emergency fleet, which cost the government more than three billion dollars and which it sold last year for a little more than \$300,000,000! There was \$500,000,000 for the railroads; there was promise of a substantial subsidy for the shipping interests. But the government could not help the farmers, although they were advising the unemployed and the returned soldiers to "go back to the land".

In 1915 there was organized the *Non-Partisan-League*, an organization of farmers, looking to the protection of their interests. They recognized that by pooling their interests, in marketing, storing, banking, they would be able to better their condition and exert pressure on the railroads and on the market. Immediately, Wall Street began a violent campaign against them. Their first stronghold was the state of North Dakota, which they captured and in which they established their own granaries, their own banks and marketing facilities. But Wall Street was mightier. One bank after the other had to close. An insidious campaign of slander was conducted against them, so that they lost political control and only succeeded this year in electing a United States senator.

But the thought of the organization could not be throttled so easily. The Non-Partisan League has spread. Today it has tremendous influence among the farmers in Montana, Colorado, Oklahoma, Washington, Iowa. There is a group of men in the Senate and House who were elected by farmers and act as their representatives. There is another group who were elected by farmers and workers. They belong to both the Republican and Democratic Party, one to the Farmer Labor Party. This group is composed of about 12 men, among the most resolute and intelligent in the Senate—fighters who will go the limit and obstruct if they cannot attain their ends any other way.

Wilson's defeat in 1920 was the most overwhelming that America has witnessed. Harding's plurality of more than 7,000,000, declared beyond any suspicion that the country wanted no more of Wilson. His policy and double-dealing were condemned, and Harding, "honest" Harding, who would not take us into Europe, was put into office. (Not that that made any difference to Wall Street, which keeps up this marionette show for the delight of the stupid populace.) But Wilson, the man of the "New Freedom", who pretended to realize the viciousness of the system and wanted to see "fair play", had proved to be a tyrant. At the behest of Wall Street, he sent troops against the striking steel workers in 1919, he threatened the coal miners in 1920. Harding, the overwhelming choice of the "people" could do no such thing. In 1921, Harding utterly disregarded the eight to ten millions unemployed, offering no help, but merely appealing to the employers to aid them. In 1922, when more than a million coal miners, railroad workers and textile workers went out on strike, he found no better method of satisfying their demands than that employed by his predecessor—at the behest of Wall Street. Lead and prison was their reward. The brutality of Attorney General Daugherty, who threatened the life of organized labor by his infamous injunction, put the cap on the ability of the Harding administration.

Floundering in international policy; open sponsorship of big capital (ship subsidy); contempt for the needs of the ex-soldiers, who demanded a bonus; disregard for the demands of the farmers; a threat to destroy organized labor. In 1922, the Republican Party lost the 7,000,000 votes that it gained in 1920.

But most of all has been the lesson taught to the working-class and to the farmers of America. *Namely, that there is no difference between the representation of the Republican and the Democratic parties.* The candidates are selected by Wall Street and must carry out Wall Street's orders. For no politician can live in America unless he is backed by Wall Street or by conscious, organized groups representing certain class interests.

The next Congress offers a more friendly appearance. Yet no revolutionary is blinded by such appearances. He knows very well that although the voters manifested a natural reaction to the brutality and disregard that the Harding administration has shown to the needs of the workers and farmers, the repudiation of Harding does not mean a conscious political expression of a new direction in American affairs. For the moment, greater liberalism is being manifested. A number of well-meaning progressives have been elected to the Senate and House. A number of progressive or liberal governors of both parties have been elected in several States. There will be a pause in the violent terrorization of the working class. By the passage of several Farmers' Subsidy bills, the administration will endeavour to regain the favor and support of the

farmers. *American capitalism sits firmly in the saddle and can afford this luxury!*

It is quite natural that in 1921 the farmers should have been inclined to support intervention in Europe; and again in 1922. They could not dispose of their products and realized that, until Europe was rehabilitated, there would be no stable market for American agricultural produce. The high cost of American industrial products and the prices which were raised still more by the enactment of the new tariff bill, aroused the antagonism of the farmers. Hence they looked to interference in the broken-down affairs of Europe. They were especially interested in a revival of the buying power of Germany—one of their biggest customers for wheat and cotton. In return they would expect German industrial products at the lower price at which Germany could produce them.

American manufacturers, on the other hand, were against intervention. They fear the competition of Germany. They have constantly pointed out that American workers must agree to work longer hours and accept lower wages, if America is successfully to compete with Germany. But the American workman is not ready to accept any such terms. There has arisen a so-called scarcity of labor. The "normalcy" of 1,500,000 unemployed has been attained, and several industries are in want of more "hands", particularly the steel and automobile industries. The former wants cheap, unskilled labor, willing to toil 12 hours a day, 7 days a week, at 25 cents an hour—a pauper's wage in the United States!

American bankers, again, did not take a definite stand for some time. It was hard to say whether French Imperialism would gain the upper hand in Europe or not. The trip of Clémenceau to America did not help to win sympathy. The leading press did its best to support his enthusiastic sabre-rattling speeches; but all to no avail. France had not ratified the Washington Disarmament Conference decisions. France was conducting an extensive military crusade. She was expending a large part of her budget for military purposes and, in addition, was helping to equip the Polish army. Furthermore, France was engaging in every kind of military adventure, which would prevent her from paying her debt and, at the same time, possibly lead to a collision with American Imperialism.

Perhaps one of the most emphatic indications of American capitalist opposition to France was due to the conduct of France in the Angora matter. American imperialists are extremely interested in the oil fields of Mosul and of Mesopotamia. It is bad enough to have to negotiate with one government—Great Britain—without having the extra task of dickering with another far more militant government. France was disturbing enough, without interfering with the direct interests of America!

Hence there gradually evolved a tendency among American financiers to intervene in European affairs—on the side of Germany. Not that there was any excess of love for Germany, but there was a need of *checkmating France and French ambitions.*

But all of this challenged the stand of the Republican Party, which was against any interference in European affairs. Life, however, is stronger than all resolutions. Borah, who wanted nothing to do with Europe, introduced a motion calling on the president to convene an international economic conference, to settle the huge financial difficulties burdening the governments of Europe. President Harding declared that the time was not yet ripe, and that other steps were being taken to arrange matters. Since that time, the British debt matter has been arranged. Great Britain and the United States may now work hand in hand, although it is difficult to determine how the British government is going to raise the interest on the debt! Time has passed, and the Ruhr question has become the most urgent in the world. Again Borah calls on the President to convoke an international economic conference. Report now has it that two American interests are intervening most effectively in the Ruhr affair, one on either side of the question. Harriman, Kuhn, Loeb and Co.—i.e., Standard Oil—are helping to "stabilize" the German mark by advancing \$100,000,000 to the Reichsbank; while J. P. Morgan, Schneider-Creusot and the Credit Lyonnais are supporting the French government in an effort to "stabilize" the franc. The prize is, of course, the Ruhr industrial district.

American financial interests are settling the Ruhr question among themselves—and the U.S. Government will merely have the privilege of confirming their decision. This is as should be in a Class State!

So America will come out of its benign state of "beautiful isolation", as Wilson wished—and for which he was decisively defeated; as Harding did not wish it—and for which he was decisively elected.

The American worker has been little interested in European politics. Despite the fact that 38 million Americans (or one third of the population), are of foreign stock—the American worker has had troubles enough of his own without bothering about Europe. Distance and remoteness from international relations have fostered this indifference. The war woke him up—and he was glad to take an oath that America would have to stay out of European affairs. Europe meant war for him—and it means war to him today.

He will now have to get used to the idea of war, for American finance has decided to invest in Europe. Out of this internationalism of capitalism, the American worker will imbibe an international solidarity of the working-class which is still to be created, to be sure, but of which he is completely ignorant. Until he has learned this, he will not see the snare of the capitalist "democracy" with which America is blessed; nor will he perceive the might of the international proletariat in putting an end to this game of International Imperialism.

FASCISM

To the Executive Committees of all Sections of the Communist International!

Dear Comrades.

The Executives of the Communist International, the Red International of Labor Unions and the Communist Youth International have decided, to launch an extensive international campaign against Fascism.

An *International Fighting Fund* must be created in every country, for the purpose of combatting Fascism by word, pen and deed. In the first place, efficient support should be given to the Italian labor organizations.

The statute for the collection and administration of the *International Fighting Fund* against Fascism, has already been published in No. 16 of the *English International Press Correspondence*, (Feb. 15, 1923).

The International Committee for the administration of the *Fighting Fund* and for the organization of the international campaign against Fascism, has been provisionally established in Berlin. Comrade *Klara Zetkin* is chairman of said committee.

The Provisional International Committee has addressed an open letter to the Executives of all the international proletarian organizations, with the request that they join in the struggle against Fascism. We recommend that you request every proletarian organization in your respective country to participate in the creation of National Committees. In any case, you must *at once* create Provisional National Committees (according to the decisions of the Comintern and R.I.L.U.) which are to organize the necessary money collections.

Needless to say, the anti-Fascist campaign is not to confine itself to collections. The National Committees should *at once* take up the fight against Fascism,—in the press, in meetings, in the factories and trade unions. They are to be in constant touch with the International Committee and report to it on their activities.

As soon as the Provisional International Committee will have overcome the first technical difficulties, it will send detailed instructions and plans to the various National Committees, on the organization of the fight against Fascism.

We request you to get to work without delay.

With Communist greetings,

The Provisional International Committee for Combatting Fascism.

Klara Zetkin (Chairman).

Circular of the Communist Party of Italy

To the Communist Parties of all Countries!
To the Italian Communist groups abroad!
To all Italian Communist refugees!

The latest wave of persecution by the Italian Fascist government which has caused many thousands of communists and also the greater portion of the local party leaders to be thrust into prison, has evoked a noticeable response from the masses of the international proletariat. We hereby wish to notify all our comrades abroad and the Italian political refugees that our party has preserved its central organizations uninjured and is thereby enabled to order its ranks.

We appeal to the Executives of our European and American brother parties to support our political refugees, in so far as they are shown to be not "professional refugees", to