
Report to the National Executive Committee

[circa January 1, 1917]

by Adolph Germer

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This report seems to have been sent out by mail to the members of the NEC just prior to the
January 6-7, 1917 meeting of that body in Chicago.

To the National Executive Committee:

Comrades:—

On November 22nd [1916] I sent a letter to every Secretary of State asking for the official election returns, but so far only 13 gave us the full figures, 17 gave the vote for Presidential candidates, and 19 failed to respond. Since then I have sent another letter to those who gave us either partial returns or none at all and asked for the complete returns.

From the figures so far gathered it is obvious that our vote fell far below that of 1912 — it will probably be around 600,000. The reasons for this decline are various.

First, the general apathy that has prevailed in the party for the past three or four years and from which we have only in a measure recovered. I say in a measure because only just prior to the election and since that has there been any marked evidence of building up the party organization.

Second, the conflicting elements over the question of militarism and war which grew out of the European disaster, contributed their share to the decline of the vote and under the slogan adopted by the Democratic Party, "He kept us out of war," many who in 1912 voted the Socialist ticket, as well as some who in the past have called themselves the "real Marxian revolutionary socialists," went over to the Wilson camp, while in some instances those who charged Wilson with being pro-ally voted for Hughes. This can be seen by comparing the state vote with the national. In many

states the national vote fell below that cast for the state candidates. On the other hand, in some states, due to local issues, the vote for state candidates was below that cast for the Presidential candidates. Illinois is one instance and here it was due to the sharp lines drawn between Dunne, the Democratic candidate for Governor, and Lowden, the Republican. On the eve of the election, the officials of the Illinois State Federation of Labor flooded the state with a circular urging the re-election of Wilson and Dunne. The names of two Socialist Party members were on the circular and this was capitalized by the Democratic machine and no doubt had some effect on the vote.

Arizona is another such instance were Governor Hunt was up for re-election. There are a few other states where local issues cut into the state vote.

Here are the states where we have both the National and State vote which show the varying result:

<i>State</i>	<i>Debs 1912</i>	<i>Benson 1916</i>	<i>Other 1916 Votes Obtainable</i>
Alabama	3,029	1,925	
Arizona	3,163	3,174	2,827 *
Arkansas	8,153	6,999	9,730 †
California	79,201	43,263	49,341 †
Colorado	16,418	10,049	12,421 *
Connecticut	10,056	5,353	5,279 †
Delaware	566	486	490 ‡
Florida	4,806	7,894	
Georgia	1,028	966	
Idaho	11,960	8,066	

Illinois	81,249	61,394	52,316 ‡
Indiana	36,931	21,855	22,156 ‡
Iowa	16,967	10,976	
Kansas	26,779	24,685	33,172 ‡
Kentucky	11,647	4,734	
Louisiana	5,249	284	
Maine	2,541	2,186	1,558 ‡
Maryland	3,996	2,674	2,590 †
Massachusetts	12,622	11,058	10,582 ‡
Michigan	23,211	16,120	15,614 ‡
Minnesota	27,505	20,117	26,306 ‡
Mississippi	2,061	1,484	
Missouri	28,466	14,608	14,654 †
Montana	10,885	9,467	11,341 ‡
Nebraska	10,185	7,141	7,425 †
Nevada	3,313	3,065	9,572 †
New Hampshire	1,980	1,319	1,199 ‡
New Jersey	15,928	10,405	13,358 †
New Mexico	2,859	1,999	
New York	63,381	45,985	
North Carolina	1,025	509	490 ‡
North Dakota	6,966	5,705	8,472 †
Ohio	89,930	38,092	38,187 †
Oklahoma	42,262	45,190	
Oregon	13,343	9,711	7,243 ‡
Pennsylvania	83,614	42,637	
Rhode Island	2,049	1,758	2,167 †
South Carolina	164	135	
South Dakota	4,662	3,760	3,556 †
Tennessee	3,594	2,445	2,187 †
Texas	24,896	26,751	
Utah	9,023	4,460	4,497 *
Vermont	928	798	
Virginia	820	1,062	
Washington	40,134	22,544	
West Virginia	15,336	6,150	4,881 *
Wisconsin	33,481	27,802	30,649 ‡
Wyoming	2,760	1,453	1,334 †
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	815,934	597,864	450,980

Herewith is a list of states from which we have the vote for Presidential candidates and State candidates. These figures show that there were 38,355 more votes cast for the State candidates than for the National.

<i>State</i>	<i>Benson</i>	<i>Other Votes Obtainable</i>
Alabama	3,174	2,827
Arkansas	6,999	9,730
California	43,263	49,341
Colorado	10,049	12,421
Connecticut	5,353	5,279
Delaware	486	490
Illinois	61,394	52,316
Indiana	21,855	22,156
Kansas	24,685	33,172
Maryland	2,674	2,590
Massachusetts	11,058	10,582
Michigan	16,120	15,614
Minnesota	20,117	26,306
Missouri	14,608	14,654
Montana	9,564	11,342
Nebraska	7,141	7,425
Nevada	3,065	9,572
New Hampshire	1,319	1,199
New Jersey	10,405	13,358
North Carolina	509	490
North Dakota	5,705	8,472
Ohio	38,092	28,187
Oregon	9,711	7,243
Pennsylvania	42,637	45,385
Rhode Island	1,758	2,167
Tennessee	3,760	2,187
Utah	2,260	4,497
West Virginia	6,150	4,881
Wisconsin	27,802	30,649
Wyoming	1,453	1,334
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	414,053	450,980

Key: *- Legislature; †- U.S. Senator; ‡- Governor.

Third: in addition to the war propaganda, the Adamson eight-hour law and a few other so-called labor laws were instrumental in befuddling the workers.

Fourth: the funds received during the last cam-

paigned were lower than in 1912. Herewith I quote the figures for 1908, 1912, and 1916 respectively:

1908	\$45,257.54
1912	54,580.96
1916	51,000.69

In view of the fact that our average membership for 1916 is about one-third less than in 1912, the campaign fund last year makes a better proportionate showing.

I am mailing to you a copy of the auditor's report which shows the amounts received and disbursed for various purposes.

The extraordinary efforts put forth by the old parties and the almost unlimited funds spent by them demanded additional financial means on our part to offset their work, but the foregoing comparison shows that available funds were inadequate to properly prosecute the campaign.

You will observe that we have a campaign deficit of \$8,827.05 as against \$12,016.86 of 1912. In my <...line missing...> effort to meet this debt and use the regular income for organization purpose. A debt is always a source of discouragement and hampers the regular work. We should issue a call for funds, first, to pay off the campaign deficit and, second, create a campaign fund for 1918 and 1920. Several letters have been received from comrades urging the creation of a 1918-1920 campaign fund so that we will not open our activities in the eleventh hour as was the case in 1916.

Before leaving the subject of the campaign, I want to express a word of gratitude to Comrade Carl D. Thompson for his ready cooperation and cordiality in all matters relating to our work. My association with Comrade Thompson has been of the most pleasant character.

Membership.

Since the election we have received numerous letters from different states expressing the conviction that the slump in our vote was due in a large measure to inadequate organization and assuring us that they are making special efforts to increase their membership and improve the effectiveness of their activities.

Wherever the comrades show a desire to strengthen their local movement, we should assist them by furnishing a seasoned organizer and bear a part of his expense and I recommend that we recruit a few comrades who are willing to work on reasonable terms and offer them to states that show a desire to specialize on Party organization. I have a few such comrades in mind who did splendid work during the recent campaign.

The following table shows the average party membership from 1903 to 1916:

1903	15,975
1904	20,763
1905	23,327
1906	26,784
1907	29,270
1908	41,751
1909	41,470
1910	58,011
1911	84,716
1912	118,045
1913	95,957
1914	93,579
1915	79,374
1916 (11 months)	83,067

The average membership has increased somewhat over last year although far from satisfactory in view of the campaign activities. It is clearly evident that there is something wrong either with our method of approach or the character of our literature used for propaganda purposes. Perhaps it is due to the shortcomings of both. It is an undeniable fact that we have failed to reach the masses of the people and attract them to our movement. I believe that with the consistent and systematic distribution of the monthly leaflets, if they will deal with questions that will invite the attention of the workers, we will accomplish in a measure at least what we have failed on in the past.

At the last meeting, I reported on a "follow up" letter plan. The preliminary work is done on that and the first letter will have gone out before the date of your meeting.

We are going to experiment with this plan in the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and Missouri. In these states we have selected the liveliest locals and if the

plan proves successful, we will extend it to other states and ask that state organizations, locals, and individual members take it up. If we do not succeed in materially building up a membership, we will, to a degree at least, break down some prejudice against our movement which will, in the future, make the task of organization easier.

The Monthly Leaflets.

The first issue of the monthly leaflet came off the press two weeks ago and they will be ready for distribution on January 7th. We had 400,000 printed which were nearly all distributed. One thing the Committee overlooked at the previous meeting was to designate authors for the first leaflet. I took the matter up with Comrades Berger and Work and they suggested that I write it. This I agreed to do and devoted it to an appeal for organization. I asked Comrade Work to write the second and he did so in his usual effective style.

Here let me say that after going into the leaflet situation more thoroughly, I find that the price we set is somewhat low and unless we receive a great number of orders from the central states, comprising the first, second, and third postal zone, we will not break even. One thousand leaflets weigh 4 1/2 pounds and must be paid at the five pound rate, which is as follows:

1st zone	\$ 0.07
2nd zone	0.09
3rd zone	0.14
4th zone	0.23
5th zone	0.32
6th zone	0.41
7th zone	0.51
8th zone	0.60

You will see that in the eighth zone, the amount we receive is consumed entirely in postage.

Unless there should be a drop in the price of paper, which is not likely to happen for some months, we should increase the price on all future orders to \$0.75 per thousand. This will enable us to carry the leaflets up to and including the 5th zone and make sufficient profit to cover the losses on all that go be-

yond that. We can fully justify an increase in price of \$0.15 per thousand in view of the present high cost of paper. I do not believe that it will decrease the orders in the least.

Designate Authors.

At this meeting the Committee should designate the authors for a sufficient number of leaflets to carry over until your subsequent meeting.

Shipping Literature.

The system of shipping our literature from Racine has not proven satisfactory. It is true from an immediate financial standpoint it is cheaper, but in the long run it is to our advantage to ship from here [Chicago] as it will give us a direct control over the work. We are gradually getting our literature down here and intend to make all small shipments from the National Office. All large orders, and there are not many of them, can be shipped from Racine. First, because a large shipment will be given better attention and second, it will save a duplication of carriage expenses. We have placed the shipping in charge of Comrade Charles O. Sherman, who has considerable experience in that line.

The American Socialist.

The American Socialist is a source of loss to the Party, especially so since the price of print paper has gone up. When I assume the duties of the office [July 1, 1916] the price we paid for paper was \$2.20 per cwt. The understanding Comrade [Walter] Lanfersiek had with the paper company was that they should furnish 18 rolls per month. There was no written contract and in September we were informed that the price on the agreed 18 rolls of paper per month would be increased to \$3.75 and all above that would be \$5.75 per cwt. At that time I secured a written assurance that there would be no increase before the first of January 1917.

I have gone over the cost as carefully as possible and find the following result:

Cost per 100 papers.

	— circulation —		
	50,000	60,000	70,000
Paper	\$0.33	\$0.33	\$0.33
Printing	.24	.24	.24
Wages	.146	.12	.104
Postage	.06	.06	.06
Rent	.016	.0133	.0115
Incidentals	.01	.01	.01
Stencils	.005	.005	.005
	\$0.807	\$0.7783	\$0.7605

This will make each yearly subscription cost about as follows:

50,000 circulation	\$0.41
60,000 circulation	\$0.395
70,000 circulation	\$0.38

The amount received for advertising is about 3.5 cents per hundred papers. According to these figures there would be no loss on *The American Socialist* were it not for the club rates and premiums given for subscriptions. If the club rates of 40 weeks for \$0.25 are eliminated and the commissions reduced, *The American Socialist* should be made to pay its own way.

Woman's Fund.

During the campaign, and since, considerable time of one and sometimes more of the office force has been taken up in getting the correspondence and mailing literature for work among women. None of the clerical expenses are charged up to that fund. While it does not amount to a great deal, yet every branch of the office should bear its share of the expense and I recommend that the wages of one stenographer at \$15.00 per week be paid out of the Women's Fund.

We addressed a letter to each State Secretary asking his opinion as to the best method of apply the "Woman's Fund." Some replied saying they favored its use in strictly organizational work while a few favored its use both for organization and woman suffrage campaigns.

Personally, I am of the opinion that the fund should be used for < illegible phrase > spent in states where woman suffrage happens to be an issue, and then only with the understanding that the work be done in conjunction with the party and not independently.

High Cost of Living.

This is a subject in which everyone is interested and on which we are able to obtain a ready hearing. It offers an opportunity to present our propaganda as nothing else will and we should not let this splendid opening to propagate our ideas slip by.

As previously reported to you, I have held several meetings with the Translator-Secretaries anent a campaign against the present outrageously high cost of living and submitted to you some general suggestions. No motion was offered, no doubt, because of the nearness of your meeting.

Comrade [Meyer] London introduced a bill in Congress on December 21, 1916, providing for an embargo on foodstuffs and the creation of a commission to regulate the transportation, marketing, preservation, and distribution of food. Our program should include local activities such as municipal food centers, coal yards, etc.

In this campaign we should enlist the cooperation of labor unions and other progressive organizations in order to give it the strongest possible backing and effect.

We have placed this subject on the agenda for your consideration and action.

Funds for National Committee Meeting and Convention.

According to the National Constitution, it is the duty of the NEC to set aside a percentage of the dues sufficient to cover the cost of National Committee Meetings and National Convention. There has been a motion initiated by the [New York] 18th, 19th, 22nd, and 29th Branch Assembly Districts providing for a National Convention to be held in 1917. The motion does not provide the method by which the necessary

funds for a convention shall be raised, but the comment suggest that it be by levying a \$0.25 per member assessment.

In addition to determining the percentage of dues to be set aside to defray the expense of a National Committee meeting, it may also be well that you issue a statement bearing on the financial end of a Special National Convention. A National Committee meeting costs between \$4,000 and \$5,000 and a Convention of 200 delegates approximately \$15,000. Either the National Committee Meeting should be dispensed with or effort should be made to defeat a Convention. One gathering, whether it is a meeting of the National Committee or the Special National Convention, should be sufficient for all good purposes.

International Dues.

At the last meeting I was instructed to pay \$100 on our indebtedness for dues to the International Bureau. This was done. Our further indebtedness, including dues for 1917, is \$1,216.80. I have been desirous of making additional payments, but the necessary funds have not been available.

National Headquarters.

For several years there has been a desire to free ourselves from a landlord and build our own headquarters. The idea, however, has never taken on concrete form. Money has been coming in from time to time and there is now on hand \$1,048.80 for that purpose. A National Headquarters Committee has been elected consisting of Comrades John C. Kennedy, Carl D. Thompson, Walter Lanfersiek, and two members of the NEC. This Committee has done virtually nothing in the past two years to promote the creation of a fund, etc. Local Cook County [Illinois] recently elected a Headquarters Committee to investigate the feasibility of getting their own building. I was invited to attend one meeting, which I did on account of the pending action on National Headquarters. The Cook County Committee decided to postpone further plans until the next meeting of the NEC, when that Committee would attend and take the question up with

you. The idea of the Cook County Committee is that the National, State, and County offices should be in one building. We have notified the comrades in Hammond, Ind., of the date of your meeting so that they might be present and renew their proposition.

Summarizing the recommendations, they are as follows:

1st: That an effort be made to clean up the campaign deficit.

2nd: Take steps to create a campaign fund for 1918 and 1920.

3rd: Recruit organizers and put them in the field where state organizations make a special effort to increase the membership.

4th Increase the price of monthly leaflets to \$0.75 per thousand.

5th: Designate authors for the monthly leaflets.

6th: That the wages of one stenographer be paid out of Woman's Fund.

7th: Woman's Fund to be spent for regular propaganda and organization work except in states where special suffrage campaign has the enthusiastic support of state organization and then only when work is done in conjunction with the regular state organization.

8th: Undertake a nationwide campaign against high cost of living in conjunction with unions and progressive organizations.

9th: Set aside portion of dues for expenses incident to National Committee meeting and National Convention.

10th: Issue a statement urging that in the event a Special Convention is held, that the 1917 National Committee meeting be dispensed with.

11th: Revive interest in Headquarters Fund.

Conclusion.

In spite of our failure to roll up the vote that we so earnestly worked for and confidentially expected, there is no cause whatever for discouragement. Had we secured two or even three million votes, we would still not have Socialism — although we would have been nearer to it. But even then, we would be obliged to battle just as hard and determinedly as now. This is not the first time in the history of the Socialist Movement that we have met with what our enemies inter-

pret as defeat. The so-called defeats are no occasion for us to cast the shadow of gloom over the Movement as some well-meaning but temperamentally pessimistic comrades are prone to do. Pessimism has never won anything. Only hope, courage, confidence, and determination will set humanity free. Our Cause is right and the right, in spite of temporary reverse, will triumph.

Respectfully submitted,

Adolph Germer,
Executive Secretary.

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