

# Ford---The End of an Illusion.....

By John Pepper

Our political life revolves, rich and full of change as a kaleidoscope.

Yesterday Henry Ford was very seriously taken as a candidate for the presidency. Candidate of great masses of farmers, small business men and workers.

That was yesterday. And today Henry Ford has made a declaration denying his own candidacy and endorsing President Coolidge as the best candidate.

Of course it is not unusual for the world's richest manufacturer to endorse for the presidency the candidate of the big bankers and trusts. Such a fact does not require any elaborate explanation. But what is unusual and calls for explanation is, how was it possible that the richest manufacturer of the world could have become a serious candidate of struggling farmers, handicapped small business men and even of exploited workers?

## The Man of Contradictions.

Ford's role is the most paradoxical fact of American political life. Here we see the greatest contradiction, seemingly impossible of solution.

The greatest manufacturer of the world--and his name is on the lips of thousands and thousands of workers.

The greatest single exploiter in the United States--but the platform of his followers said: "Government in the hands of a privileged class has become an agency for exploitation instead of a security for life, liberty and property. The land of the free and the home of the brave is fast declining into a land of exploiters and exploited."

One of the richest men in the world--yet he thunders against Wall Street, and his name is a standard around which poor people rally.

Ford declared that he would not be a good president in normal times, but would be good in a crisis or in case of war when he would not be bound by the constitution, when a dictatorship would be necessary--yet his followers are calling for a struggle "to save democracy to the United States."

Paradoxes and contradictions. But the paradoxes can be solved and the contradictions explained if we dig deeper, if we analyze, not only party platform and mass illusions, but the class relationships.

Those who would simplify capitalist society in such a way as to resolve it into only two classes, exploiter and exploited, will never understand the role of Henry Ford. We could not understand in the least the political life of the United States or of any other country if we tried to reduce Marxism to the wisdom which would have it that on one side stands the working class and on the other simply the compact, reactionary mass of the bourgeoisie. If this simplification were Marxism, politics would be the art easiest in the world to learn, and the A B C of Marxian Communism would be identical with the A B C of the primary school.

## Manufacturers Versus Banks and Trusts.

True, Ford is one of the richest men of the world. But his riches are qualified by the fact that he is a manufacturer. Ford is a manufacturer of finished products, and we must understand that this is something different from bank capital and railroad corporations and basic industries. Ford is one of the richest men of the world. But Ford is a manufacturer of automobiles. And that makes him different from Rockefeller, head of the oil trust; Morgan, leader of bank capital; Gary, the chief of the steel trust. Ford became big as an individual manufacturer, and not as the head of a trust. As the manifesto of his followers says about him: "Whatever vices the competitive system has, this man has exemplified." Ford as a manufacturer of finished products has to buy steel and coal, must use railroads, must borrow working capital. His interests are against the interests of the steel trust, coal trust, railroad corporations and against the money trust of Wall Street. He is against the trusts because trusts mean monopoly, and therefore high prices of steel and

coal, high freight rates and high interest on money. This explains Ford's periodic thunders against trusts and Wall Street. Ford wants to produce fertilizer. For this reason he wants to buy Muscle Shoals. But against this plan he finds the power of the fertilizer trust, and behind the fertilizer trust, the whole state power, the government and Congress. This explains Ford's crusades for cheap fertilizer and his accusation against the fertilizer trust and against the patron of the trust, the government. The contradictions between finishing and basic industry, the contradictions between manufacturers and bank capital, the contradictions between individual manufacturers and trusts exist, not only in the United States, but in every highly developed capitalist country. The whole present political development in Great Britain and Germany would be meaningless if we were not to take into consideration these internal conflicts within the capital class. Without these contradictions, the conflict between Baldwin and Lloyd George in Great Britain, or the fight between Stinnes and Stresemann in Germany could not be understood.

## Ford, the Saviour of the Poor.

True, Ford possesses hundreds of millions, and exploits tens of thousands of workers. But his economic interests force him into the fight against Wall Street, and against the trusts of steel, coal and transportation. This links Ford with all those strata whose interests are opposed to those of the trusts and Wall Street. This condition makes a bridge between Ford and small business men, farmers and class unconscious but boss-hating workers. Small business men hate the trusts which ruin them. Farmers hate the banks which choke them with mortgages, hate trusts which raise the prices of all industrial products and thru high coal and steel prices, and thru high railroad corporations which, by high freight rates, skin off for themselves the cream of their crops. Ford "fights" against the trusts and Wall Street. That is why small busi-

ness men, farmers and class unconscious workers saw in him their leader and Saviour.

It sounds almost incredible! The richest man of the world and the saviour of the poor! But we must understand that the very reason that he could play the saviour of the poor was the fact that he is the richest man of the world. Ford, for the illusion-stricken masses, is like Prince Charming of the fairy tale. It is true he is the richest man of the world, but he was a poor mechanic. He is not a trust, but on the contrary, he became big in the fight against Wall Street. He is the personified victory of the "competitive system." Ford's career lives as an ideal in the hearts of the small business man, the poor mechanics, and even thousands and thousands of workers.

## Ford and the Third Party.

Ford is no politician. He belongs to none of the political parties. But this fact also, does not act against him, but for him. The discontent breaking forth from the depths of small business men, intelligentsia and farmers has found three mass ex-

pressions. The La Follette movement which has a western center, the Hearst movement, with an eastern center and the Ku Klux Klan movement with a southern center. Considered from a class standpoint, the La Follette, Hearst and Ku Klux Klan movements are various expressions of the same: classes, farmers, small business men and intelligentsia. Politically they are, of course, very different from one another. The La Follette movement gives the dominant role to the farmers. Small business men determine the complexion of the Hearst movement. In the Ku Klux Klan, the most backward farmers, and especially the intelligentsia, dominate. The La Follette movement is one of farms, villages and small towns. The Hearst movement is mostly a political expression of big cities. The Ku Klux Klan represents the intelligentsia in the South; in Ohio and Illinois it represents the prejudices of the native-born workers; in up-state New York, the backward farmers. The La Follette movement wants an alliance with the exploited farmers and workers. The ideology of the Hearst movement is best represented in Brisbane's petty-bourgeois, pink Socialist editorials. The Ku Klux Klan wants to exterminate immigrant workers, destroy trade unions, crush--international Jewry and international bankers. La Follette, Hearst and the Ku Klux Klan are produced by the same classes, but they are colored variously by the various strata of those classes which dominate in each movement, and by varying regional and historical traditions.

La Follette's overall provincialism, Hearst's evening suit Socialism, and the Ku Klux Klan tar and feather Americanism--only one man was able to unite in his person these three movements--Henry Ford. Henry Ford was the only possible candidate for president who could unite in himself all these elements on a national scale. He was the only one who, over the heads of the regional leaders, over the heads of La Follette, Hearst and the Ku Klux Klan, could unite

the masses of these three movements against the old capitalist parties. He is with the Ku Klux Klan in Jew-baiting, but the small business man pardons him the because of his crusades against Wall Street. He is against trade unions; but the class conscious workers overlook this because he pays high wages. He is for a strong army; but the pacifist farmers forgive him because he is for cheap fertilizer and cheap coal and steel.

## Emperor Ford.

And the last paradox. The farmers' ideal is democracy. They hate the dictatorship of the big interests and centralized government, and at the same time their ideal is Henry Ford who declares that he is not a good president for normal times, but only for a period of dictatorship, when the constitution does not count. It is unquestionable that farmers are a democratic class; but history shows that the political form of farmer democracy is very often the rule of a dictator. The economic and social role of the farmers explains this tendency. The farmers live dispersed--millions and millions of small units; and they can venture the fight against the overwhelming power of the centralized trusts, cities and banks only in the form of a centralized dictatorship. Napoleon I was made emperor by the French farmers, against the bourgeoisie of the cities. As Marx once expressed it: The strongest Napoleonic idea was the solid peasant plot of land. A dictatorship of the farmers was the fundamental of the Caesarism of Napoleon III. From farmers originated the movement which sought to make Roosevelt's life-long president. If Ford's day-dreams of dictatorship would be realized, it would be a farmer dictatorship against centralized trusts, banks and big cities--and workers.

All these factors together explain how it came about that Henry Ford, the rich man and exploiter, became the saviour of the poor exploited. Ford was the greatest and most formidable possibility for a Third

Party on a national scale, and at the same time the greatest menace against a class movement of the conscious workers and exploited farmers. This shows the chaos and great confusion of American politics. It is the most serious symptom of economic and political instability of our country, that the test of Henry Ford's dictatorship became a possibility. It shows the most serious eternal illness of the seemingly proud and sound American capitalism, that the dissatisfaction and revolt of the masses could turn Henry Ford, Henry Ford was narcotizing hope for the bankrupt masses. What a world-historic jest!--Henry Ford as dictator of 110,000,000 people! A man with ignorance of a poor mechanic with all the autocratic tendencies of a big exploiter. A man who believes that he stands above all class contradictions because he is prepossessed all the class prejudices of the narrow-minded petty bourgeoisie, man of the coolest business calculation and uncalculated outbursts of rage, bordering on insanity. A man who in the whole United States amassed wealth most quickly and the greatest scale; and yet, this superficial crusades against trusts has misled millions of poor exploited.

Thru his immense private property Henry Ford is tied up with the general interests of capitalism. As a manufacturer he is against the power of banks and basic industries. As a Coolidge administration, the government of trusts and banks has almost bought out Henry Ford. Coolidge promised him Muscle Shoals. For the capitalist, has betrayed the masses who foolishly trusted in millions of farmers, small business men have become the poorer by illusion.

We Communists must utilize every opportunity to make clear to workers and exploited farmers the great lesson of Ford's betrayal, not a strong personality, but a new party.

## November Dues Payments Reach Record Mark

By C. E. RUTHENBERG,  
Executive Secretary, Workers Party.

Tabulation of the dues payments to the National Office of the Workers Party for the month of November show a total larger than at any time in the history of the party organization.

The dues figures for the month of November show an increase of over 1,500 as against the previous two months.

These figures are an indication of the success of the campaign for new members which the party has been conducting during the past two or three months.