

# Revolutionary Significance of Teapot Dome

By JOHN PEPPER

**T**HE Teapot Dome affair is not an ordinary scandal—it is a political factor of the first magnitude.

The Teapot Dome scandal is not a case of ordinary corruption—it is a revolutionary factor of paramount importance.

Since the world war we have not witnessed anything so big taking place as the Teapot Dome scandal. Since the world war not a single political event has so intensively occupied and so deeply shaken up the American nation as the Teapot Dome scandal. William Randolph Hearst, who is unquestionably one of the greatest experts in judging the psychology of the American masses, wrote with justification: "I am acquainted in a way with the public sentiment in all parts of the country in which I have papers, and I have never known the public to be as much aroused over anything except a war as it is at present aroused over these oil scandals. There never has been such intense feeling and unanimity of feeling."

## America's Democratic Illusions.

Not a single people in the world had so great a faith in its government and was so proud of its governmental system as the American people. Democratic illusions of the masses are everywhere the greatest obstacle in the way of the proletarian revolution. But they prove to be insurmountable obstacles to the revolutionizing of the minds of the workers in the United States, the "classical" country of democracy, which went forth in the crusade of the world war, to "make the world safe for democracy".

The cruel searchlight of Teapot Dome has now suddenly lit up the real essence of our democracy. The masses see now that the sacred shrine of American democracy is in reality the safety-vault of big capital.

It was the pride of the mass of American citizens that our country is a republic and its head the president elected by the people. Teapot Dome drilled into the minds of the dismayed and disillusioned masses that we do indeed have an elected president, but that at the same time he has as his masters the various monarchs of finance capital, the kings of oil, the sovereigns of Wall street, the potentates of the steel trust, the whole dynasty of the Invisible Empire of finance capital. The average American citizen sees today with panic and dismay that the whole of American democracy consists of this, that we have, not only one Kaiser like imperialist Germany had, but a whole gallery of kings, czars, kaisers and emperors. The two-party system of our political life was always the most important guarantee of the undisturbed rule of the capitalist class. If the masses became dissatisfied with the Republican Party they turned to the Democratic Party. When the masses were aroused against the Democrats, they flocked to the Republicans. Teapot Dome has now put a sudden end to this nice see-saw game of American political life. Teapot Dome has compromised pitilessly the Republican and Democratic Parties at once. It has shown the great masses the essence of both parties. It has exposed both old capitalist parties as being in equal measure the parties of capitalism.

## The Power of the Ballot.

The American masses had the greatest confidence in the magic power of the ballot. Teapot Dome showed that regardless of whether the masses vote Republican or Democrat, politics remain the same politics, dominated by the capitalist trust magnates and banking powers.

Teapot Dome has shown the average citizens that all administrations are equally in the service of big capital. Almost the whole cabinet of Wilson was and is hired as employees of the powerful oil magnate Doheny; and if one member of Wilson's cabinet was not employed by Doheny it was because he was in the service of a competitor, the Standard Oil. The entire Harding administration has showed itself to have been bought by the oil interests. And it is simply an accident that only oil corruption has been uncovered. Another investigation would prove that it was no less connected with the steel interests and with Wall Street. And the Teapot Dome has shown that the Coolidge administration is even worse than the Wilson or Harding administration. Against Wilson and Harding no personal proofs have been found so far;

but President Coolidge is personally involved in the oil stench. The country does not know today what will be the next step of our president tomorrow, a message or a confession. Even the most narrow minded average American citizen sees with astonishment that all professional persecutors of the working class, all Red baiters are at the same time in the pay of finance capital. Palmer, the attorney general of the Wilson administration, the infamous initiator of wholesale deportation of Communists in 1920, is working today on the payroll of McLean, the friend of Harding and Coolidge and the proven liar of the oil investigation. And Attorney General Daugherty, the notorious instigator of the criminal in-

important task to drill that into the minds of the masses, that the Teapot Dome of the oil industry is but a sample of a hundred other Teapot Domes in other industries. The country begins to see that the individual bribing of corrupt individuals in administrations and Congress is only a dramatized symptom of the much more important and deeper system: that the whole administration, the whole congress, whether it is individually bribed or not is the kept servant of big capital. The country is beginning to realize that individual corruption is only the by-product of the system which is the rule of big capital in government.

## Capitalists Rule Both Parties.

Teapot Dome has shown that capi-

the front. The giving away of the oil fields of the nation has alarmed the masses who had tolerated without protest the great process of expropriation which made the whole country the possession of a handful of trust magnates.

Of course we Communists knew all that, before the Teapot Dome scandal happened. We have always said over and over again to the masses that that's the way it all is; but the masses themselves did not see all that and did believe it. The revolutionary significance of Teapot Dome is just this: that it has beaten into the minds of the masses this elementary Marxist-Leninist truth on the nature of capitalist government, on the personal identity of cabinet members and

## IT HAS COME TO THIS



Farmer: What shall we do with the offal?  
Worker: Bury the darn thing.

junction against the railroad strike and the criminal director of the Bridgman, Michigan, raid against the Communist stands today before the country as a friend of criminals, as accomplice in every corruption, as a criminal himself.

## The Governmental "Brass Check."

History works with surprising justice and with considerable irony. It compromised the Democratic Wilson administration and the Republican Harding-Coolidge administration. But that is not enough. It unmasked not only the past and present administrations, but the future administration too. The two most likely candidates for the presidency, McAdoo, the Democrat and Coolidge, the Republican are today the targets of suspicion and mistrust. Teapot Dome proved that McAdoo, to the "progressive" Democrat, asked and obtained money not only from Doheny the oil man, but from big steel interests and from other big capitalist forces. McAdoo sold his "political influence" as a street-walker sells her virtue to every comer indiscriminately, with the only difference that he charged enormously high prices.

The country thought at first that the bribing of Secretary of the Interior Fall, was only a case of individual corruption. But then the individual cases multiplied more and more, and with ever greater rapidity. With bitter indignation the masses see that every administration of the country in the last decade is involved in the corruption, that every outstanding figure of the United States government is part of the financial and political prostitution. The country begins to see that what Teapot Dome exposes is no longer a case of individual corruption of certain kept men, but it is a system, it is a case of a kept government. The country is beginning to see, and it is our most

tal rules both capitalist parties and their administrations, not only in domestic politics, but also in foreign politics. Teapot Dome has shown that American oil capital wants to conquer Mexico at all cost. It has proved that oil capital appointed Secretary of the Interior Fall because he was so "strong" for changing the Mexican constitution which was an obstacle in the way of the greed of American capitalists. Teapot Dome proved that oil capital was behind American intervention of 1916 in Mexico, behind the fight against the recognition of the Obregon government as well as behind the recent De la Huerta counter-revolution. Teapot Dome hammered into the minds of the masses that "American interests" are always capitalist interests.

The cruel Teapot Dome scandal dealt a big blow to our official American patriotism too. The same presidents and cabinet members and admirals of the navy who fill the land with their agitation for militarism and navalism, who always demand more hundreds of millions of dollars for their military purposes have at the same time unscrupulously betrayed the interests of national defense and handed over the oil reserves of the navy to private capitalists. Teapot Dome has revealed the close, delicate connections existing between war, patriotism and corruption. The war grafts, the plundering of the Veterans' Bureau and Teapot Dome together have shown that the capitalists make war and organize big armies and navies when the patriotic interests of profit demand it. But they are willing to cripple the army and navy if that will bring them profit.

## The Masses Are Awakening.

Teapot Dome has raised the question of public ownership all along

bankers, on the aggressive character of imperialism and the peculiarly mixed nature of capitalist profit-patriotism and profit-high treason. The Communist talk against government was "un-American". Today the American government itself is the best propagandist and agitator against itself. Teapot Dome conferred citizenship upon distrust in our holy democratic government. Teapot Dome has given an enormous impetus to the ideological process of unification of the masses of workers with the Communist vanguard.

## The True Role of the States.

The masses are beginning to recognize the true nature of our government, and that has called forth an elementary force of the masses as against the government. Millions of workers and farmers who, until now have had a naive, almost in-born confidence in American democracy, have lost and are losing their faith. This newly born mistrust is not strong enough as yet and will not be strong enough in the near future to call forth a general disillusionment with democracy and turn the masses to the Soviet system. But it is strong enough to tear away the non-capitalist masses from the capitalist parties and to bring them into new parties. Teapot Dome has given a tremendous impetus to the crystallization of a Farmer-Labor Party as well as a Third Party. On June 17, a class Farmer-Labor Party will be organized and it is unquestionable that after the Republican and Democratic conventions a Third Party in some form or other will be organized. Under the pressure of the masses vacillating "leaders" like LaFollette are forced to act. LaFollette withdrew his candidacy from the Republican primaries. The oil investigation committee and the

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Daugherty investigation committee are becoming ever more, as the capitalist dress dubs them, the "Cheka" and the "Revolutionary Tribunal" of the Third Party movement.

## Importance of Teapot Dome.

Of course, it would be a great exaggeration of the political significance of the Teapot Dome scandal to claim that all this was caused by the Teapot Dome scandal. The Teapot Dome scandal plays a big role in sharpening all conflicts of the various political groups and classes. But we should not forget that only the unheard of sharpening of the class struggle in the last years has made the Teapot Dome scandal so significant. Teapot Dome has not produced the dissatisfaction of the worker and farmer masses, but on the contrary, it is the deep dissatisfaction of the masses which makes them so receptive to the lessons of the Teapot Dome.

In the 1920 November elections the Republican Party, the party of Wall Street and the steel trust was victorious by a seven million majority. The non-capitalist classes who at that time were dissatisfied with the Democratic Party on account of the war, still had complete confidence in the Republican Party at that time. In the 1922 November elections this Republican majority disappears. The Republicans were woefully beaten, but it was not the Democrats who were the victors. A

new force appears and constitutes the "balance of power"—the "progressive-radical" bloc in Congress, composed of insurgent Republicans, Democrats and Farmer-Laborites. It is not Teapot Dome but much deeper factors of economic and political life which have caused the sharpening of the class struggle. The growing power of the monopoly of the trusts, the world war, the unheard of centralization of federal government, the deep-going economic crisis of 1921-22, the intervention of the government in the mass struggle of the million workers in the summer

of 1922, the bankruptcy of millions of farmers, the victory of the British Labor Party, the hopeless European economic situation—all these factors have brought about the disintegration of the two-party system, splitting away of the non-capitalist masses from the political leadership of big capital and the beginning of class-consciousness in the industrial workers and exploited farmers.

## Class Conflicts Sharpened.

Teapot Dome has not called forth the class struggle, but has simply sharpened it because it made it more conscious because it has elevated it

from confinement to local and regional issues, because it helped to make it nation-wide, because it focused it against the government.

We should not exaggerate the significance of Teapot Dome; but we must see clearly its tremendous revolutionary significance.

Teapot Dome has strengthened to a hitherto unheard of degree the disillusionment of our masses with our governmental system.

Teapot Dome has enlightened millions on the capitalist essence of our democracy.

Teapot Dome has drawn into political life millions of workers and farmers who until now have kept at a distance.

Teapot Dome gave a tremendous impetus to the Farmer-Labor Party movement as well as to the Third Party movement.

## Communist Mass Party.

Teapot Dome has for the first time made it possible for the slogan of the Workers Party of a workers' and farmers' government to become a real demand not only of the vanguard of the revolution, but of the great laboring masses of factories and farms.

And finally, in view of the big structural changes of our society, and the present economic depression and approaching economic crisis, Teapot Dome justifies Zinoviev's well-founded revolutionary optimism about the prospects for a Communist mass party in the United States in the near future.

## Senator Reed--an Oil Attorney

UNITED STATES Senator James A. Reed of Missouri who has been delivering speeches from coast to coast against the connections several of his colleagues have had with oil interests, has himself served in the capacity of attorney for an oil corporation.

Mr. Reed has been especially vehement in his denunciation of McAdoo as an opponent in the Democratic presidential contest because of the latter's relations to Doheny.

This fierce castigator of the "oil crowd" served as counsel for the Universal Oil Co. in the summer of 1923. The case involved a law suit brought against the Standard Oil Co. of Indiana. The suit was in the Federal Court at Kansas City and later transferred to Santa Maria, California.

We wonder whether Senator Reed would like to have the workers choose between putting Doheny's counsel or the Universal Oil Co. counsel in the White House.

The workers know that the spokesman for Doheny, Sinclair, Universal and Standard Oil interests are their enemies. Mr. Reed can't bluff them any longer.