



Mr. Ford's Page

WE HAVE seen a great deal of propaganda during the last five years and have had ample opportunity to appraise its wisdom, sincerity and effectiveness. The fact that it still continues to be used for one purpose or another, with an assurance that the human mind can be wheeled into position and marched this way or that as the propagandist desires, is beginning to get on the nerves of the people; they are reaching out beyond the propaganda for the facts, just as in a lawsuit the jury reaches out beyond the contentions of the lawyers to get at the knowledge which the witnesses may have.

Like the great financial "drives," this new business of propaganda has become so very obtrusive that it is compelling a rather critical scrutiny. There was a time when all you had to do was to start a "drive," threaten the non-contributors with an unpopular stigma, and millions rolled in. But even the "drives" are falling down. And the simple reason is that you cannot "drive" people to think any more than you can "drive" them to give.

Legitimate propaganda during the war period is very simply described. The nation was agreed that, being rightly in the war and on the right side, it had to win. It did not have to be urged to a desire to win. The desire was there. Propaganda did not create it; propaganda did not increase it. All that propaganda did was to tell the people how they could help to win. It was a distribution of information, not a storm of argument; it was knowledge and education, not mere exhortation.

And that is the mark of legitimate propaganda at all times—the facts. A fact is like granite—it stays. Winter will not freeze it, summer will not melt it, rains will not wash it away. Men may neglect it for a long time. They may stumble over it and curse it many times. But after a while they begin to build with it. The man with a fact need not worry about the indifference of the multitudes; let him tie up to his fact. In due time it will find its place. But he must be careful that it is a Fact, and not merely a notion of something he thinks could be made a fact if he could get enough people to agree with him. Agreement doesn't make facts. But facts make agreement. People who don't agree with facts get bumped by them. But it is not your place to do the bumping—the fact takes care of that.

What kills propaganda is the obvious purpose behind it. One little admixture of self-interest and your effort is wasted. You cannot preach patriotism to men for the purpose of getting them to stand still while you rob them—and get away with that kind of preaching very long.

You cannot preach the duty of working hard and producing plentifully, and make that a screen for an additional profit to yourself.

There has been too much of this kind of psychological crime committed in the world these past few years—the crime of bringing men to act from the highest and sincerest motives of self-sacrifice, and then using that high spirit for the lowest purposes.

We are going to pay the price of that sort of trifling, for there is nothing that heals so slowly and hurts so long as wounded faith.

JUST now the country is being flooded with propaganda designed to improve the state of mind in which the people find themselves with regard to industrial and economic questions. This new propaganda contains much truth, a great many things which the people need to know, and knowing which they would be saved from some very grave errors of thought and action.

But for the most part it is propaganda from a class to a class, and it has a design behind it which arouses suspicion.

The workingman is not going to take his views of duty from a man or a class whose privileges or profits depend on the workingman taking that point of view.

Employers or capitalists or close corporations of international speculators who think they can mobilize the mind of the common

people and issue orders to it, or who think they can hire a few writers and speakers and solve the whole troublesome situation with nicely selected words and phrases, are either very ignorant of human nature or are unbalanced by an exaggerated sense of their own importance and wisdom.

The plain people have stood in line a long time and have been lectured and ordered about. As long as they were persuaded that it was for the good of their country to be thus regimented, they agreed to it. But the wastes and shameless profiteering which accompanied the war have brought them a disgusting sense that in sacrifice as in other things there may be class lines too; one mass may do all the sacrificing, while one class reaps all the gains.

Propaganda issuing from a recognized class whose interests are all bound up in the preservation of the old order of things, is not only a waste of effort, it is a positive irritant to the people to whom it is addressed. They resent it, and there is hot blood in their resentment.

Undoubtedly the employing class possess facts which their employes ought to know in order to construct sound opinions and pass fair judgments; and undoubtedly the employed class possess facts which are equally important to the case and which everyone ought to know.

It is extremely doubtful, however, that either side has all the facts.

And this is where propaganda, even if it were possible for it to be entirely successful, is defective. It is not desirable that one set of ideas be "put over" on a class holding another set of ideas, but that out of both sets of ideas the true, constructive and harmonizing truth may be brought forth.

If you are going to rely on ideas, that is the way you must get them.

But there is something better, more immediately effective than the propaganda of ideas just now, and that is the Act that illustrates the Idea.

The best propaganda an employer can use is to do right now for his own men what he knows he can and ought to do.

We have been waiting too much for "social changes." We might make a start with shop changes.

We have been talking too much about "the conflict of the classes." We might make a start toward abolishing classes in our own sphere of influence.

The best propaganda you can ever have is the reputation of being square, humane and thoughtful of others all the time. There are some things you can never *tell* men, nor *persuade* them of by speech or literature. But if the things are there, the men will *know* it—you may be sure of that.

There is a great fever and flutter in certain high financial circles, and much speaking and discussion, about getting in closer touch with the men, introducing the human element, and so on.

It is all very good. But you will have to take it out of speeches and committees—you will have to get it into your own heart first. You have got to *do* something that no one but yourself can do. That is, what you do must be *personal* and it must *cost* you something. It is too late in the day for mere "jollying" and "gladhanding." Men are ready to meet you half way, but it must be something more than a sentiment they meet; it must be the real thing; actual, manifest, worthy.

Society isn't something thrust down upon us by some law; we make it ourselves. Social conditions are not made for us from outside, like the weather; we make them ourselves; they are the net result of the daily relations between man and man. We give them high-sounding names, but this is all they really are.

Every shop can become a center of a new social order simply through the introduction of a new social spirit—a new social spirit evidenced by some *act* which *costs* the management something and which benefits all. That is the only way you can prove your good intentions and win respect for your attitude. Propaganda, bulletins, lectures, everything that can be hired done or made by machine fades into insignificance beside the persuading, compelling power of a right act sincerely done.

M*UCH of the industrial propaganda used today is an effort to make words do the work of acts. If an employer would convince his men that he is square, that his interest is in their welfare as well as his own, he cannot do it by speeches and bulletins. He must do it by acts—acts that cost him something. Too much of the propaganda which is used to abate unrest is devoted to telling the workingman what he ought to do. It would be a good thing if the initiative came from the other side. Mr. Employer, isn't it your move?*