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Memorandum: Trade and Farmers

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Mr. Henry Ford has been dropping bits of revolutionary doctrine into the industrial world quite steadily for the last twenty years. They have been the kind of bits that make men cry out first that it can't be done and next that if it is done it is going to ruin the country. There was his first dash at high wages - $5.00 a day for eight hours work. The employers from the Atlantic to the Pacific heard with dismay of the decision. The employers from the Atlantic to the Pacific heard with more or less dismay that these wages, of which they so heartily approved, were paid on certain conditions; that you keep your face clean; one of them that you live peacefully with your wife; that you pay your debts; that you buy a home, if possible.

Ten years ago, just after this five dollars a day was put into operation, Mr. Ford was good enough to allow me to prowl, for a week or more, around his Dearborn factory in Detroit, seeing what was happening. I visited many factories in my time, but I never had a more exciting experience, nothing that so bordered on the emotional. Here were a group of men, making money at a rapidity that appalled the conservative, the bulk of whose time at that moment seemed to be spent on making and helping 50,000 men in the Dearborn factories to make more out of their lives. At that moment Mr. Ford had laid down a famous slogan, if we, who prove that we can make money, are not big enough also to make men out of those poor fellows who have not had a chance, there we are not worthy of our salt. Ten years have passed since that visit. The five dollars a day has become six, and the minimum wage in the Ford plant which was then five dollars is now six dollars. The determination to make men is as keen today as it was then, though there have been some changes in the methods; I fancy, then there have been changes in the model of the model of the Ford car.
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All of the experiments, the industrial ideals and ideas that I heard from Mr. Ford's lips, that were fertile in the factory when I visited it ten years ago, have been applied with the modifications that experience has proven necessary. Among the various schemes of which he talked to me then, there was one to which I was particularly sympathetic, it having been an old hope, and one to which I had found few sympathetic listeners and one for which I found scant sympathy among my industrial friends, whether they were employers or employed. It was something that had come out of, I take it, Mr. Ford's own life. "Every man," he said one day, "to be healthy and to be wise, should have something to do with the land. Those fifty thousand men of mine down here in the plant ought to be, every one of them, able to work three or four months of the year on farms. There should be some kind of exchange between the farmers and the factory. It can be done with organization and with willingness on the part of the farmers and factory men to adopt their productive needs to one another." That was, as I say, ten years ago. Now, since that day ten years ago, Mr. Ford has made numerous increase in his business. The great Dearborn factory, to which men were going from all parts of the world to view as to methods, the labor saving machinery, the application of the big industrial relation ideas, has spread and spread, and this spread has been more or less an adaptation of Mr. Ford's idea that somehow the worker and the land, should be brought into closer contact.

He is a man who himself loves the land, cannot get away from it. In that first visit of mind, ten years ago, Mr. Ford was building a house. Detroit millionaires, as a rule, when they built houses, have come into town and taken a quarter of a block or a half of a block, more or less, and put up a more or less modified chateau upon it, a chateau so big and so unlike all their traditions that they lived in them like a few peas in a big pod. Mr. Ford had on his desk one day when I was fortunate enough to be admitted to his office, the plans for a house that he wanted. It was the work of a well known architect and he said
he supposed it was very beautiful, but the thing that Mrs. Ford and I want is a home, not a palace. I am bothered. This man knows a great deal about building and he seems to think that I should like it, but I don't, nor does Mrs. Ford., and he reiterated his remark, "what we want is a place to live in." The upshot was that Mr. Ford went back to the farm on which he had been born, bought all adjacent land, I think he has something like 2 / 0 acres, and there he built the house he wants to live in. He was following that most precious of things, the genuine native instinct of ones nature; that thing which is so often utterly destroyed by taking the advice of the architect, and doing what others do. What has come out of his fidelity, from his inner instinct and

He went back to the land for his home and as his business spread he went into the country for it expansion and all the time that he has been expanding one can see evidences that he has been struggling to the theory that he laid down ten years ago that the work and the land should be brought into closer contact. (See page 141 "Today and Tomorrow")

To one who has studied at all the growth of the industries in New England, the early cotton mills and the fascinating story of the rise of the great Cheney Silk Mills to the equally fascinating story of the building up in Maine of the Box and Tag business of the Dennison's, these village industries of Mr. Ford's are very familiar. It is exactly the same kind of thing in method, only today it is a regular industry. These men and women who come from their farms and their little homes are to work eight hours a day instead of from sunlight to sunset, as they did in the old factories. They earn at least six dollars a day - as the employees of the Cheney, the Dennison's, the Fall River and New Bedford Cotton manufacturers do, and it is an organized quantity, as in the old days and there is a striking parallel between the quality of the workers. In those early days it was the sons and daughters of farm owners, town property holders, that went into factories. It is the same along the Rouge River in Michigan today.

But it would be unfair to treat Mr. Ford's idea of giving every man
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not only a trade, but a farm, as a new thing in American industrial life. As a matter of fact this combination was the pioneer combination. It has been my privilege to follow the trail of the Abraham Lincoln ancestors in this country from their arrival in 1637 down to the first day in Illinois, seven generations of them, and there was not one of these ancestors, up to his time, that did not combine with land owning, the active practice of a trade. The first of the Lincoln's in this country was a weaver and land owner, which he worked at Hemming, Massachusetts; the next was an Iron Master; the third was an Iron Master, the fourth a weaver, the fifth a pretty good Jack of all Trades; the sixth a carpenter and cabinet maker, and all of them were farmers, as I have said. As industry grew in this country, the wisest of the early leaders, dreamed Mr. Ford's dream. There was John Roach, an iron master, worthy in of note in those first days,[-- see Report of Tariff Commission.]. The idea persisted, but it become mare and more difficulty of application. An industry might be established out side of a town where there was a chance for a man at least to have a garden around his house, the city in Gulfdom may own a home impractical. It was impractical for miners to own their homes, mines shifting, mines becoming exhausted, the Company must provide the homes, a practice which brought infinite abuses. One of the most successful attempts that I personally know of overcoming these abuses of the company houses and giving to the workmen the healthy and consoling advantage of a bit of land, was begun twenty years ago by one of the ablest industrial managers I have ever known, an Irishman - Thomas Lynch. Lynch had been a miner as his father had been before him. He had risen to the successive steps to president of the Frick Coal & Coke Co., that splendid business slogan/had its origin with him some twenty-five years ago. Thomas Lynch did not put it in his

You saw it was a man consumed with human problems, the ways workers had to live. The old methods of coke and coal were deadly to the life of vegetation, to the tendency and comfort of homes, anything more barren and hateful has never been seen, than these old towns. Thomas Lynch revolted. He bodily picked up some
settlements in West Moreland County, planted them out of the reach of the
reach of the mountains and ash and slag, carried tens of thousands of limes
and gave to every family a quarter of an acre for a garden, then he supplied
and said "So to it!" offering prizes for the best
gardens. The result was as heartening as anything I have ever examined. It
is twelve years since I saw Thomas Lynch's experiment - 7,650 gardens for
8,000 families, and the thing has gone steadily on, although the fine old
Irishman left the world several years ago. Last year in this section there
were . . . . gardens (See Close report)

It is not to be supposed that all of the efforts in this country
to bring a trade and farm together have depended upon the initiative of an
employer or labor. This is to underestimate your worker. The worker, out of
whom comes 90%, at least, of our future employees, in spite of the determina-
tion of our industrial system to make us believe that the man who works
at a machine has no chance in this country to rise. As a matter of fact,
the future of industry in this country depends upon that worker and his
rise, far more than it does upon those who have already risen. You can go
to few industrial centers in this country in which you will not find workers
who have made sacrifices to satisfy this instinct of theirs for land, and
with the coming of the automobile there is more and more of this kind of thing.
(See Close about Vandergrift farms)

One of the most interesting and recent developments of this instinct
is coming through the rapid opening of Florida and the fact that Mr. Ford
had made it accessible to tens of thousands, who, under other conditions,
would not have dreamed that they could go to Florida. The demand for steins
of every sort, particularly those connected with construction of every sort,
become so great five years ago, that the recent lamented boom sounded; the high-
ways were soon packed with builders of all sorts, many of them sickly men
temporarily out of work because of weather conditions, who took their families and sped for the State, there living in camps, as a rule. They made their first with the thought of combining a little piece of land with hair trade. A year ago I went up and down the state pretty thoroughly, examining the development and trying to put my fingers on the experiment on colonization which seemed to me to approach what might be called the scientific. Nothing seemed so profoundly hopeful for Florida then the numbers of working men and women that I came across that had invested in bits of land—five, ten and twenty acres, which, after their hours of their day labor, they were busily redeeming from jungle and woods and putting into oranges, strawberries or potatoes, or any one of the multitude of crops that flourish in December, January and February in Florida and which in many cases will contribute to that monopoly of the northern market which Florida enjoys for that season of the year. (See Orlando letter) The trade in the farms is a deep instinct with most men and it is one of the most healthy of instinct, particularly healthy for men and women who work under present factory conditions. What chance has such a man or woman, brought up in a congested industrial district, never knowing from experience, knowing nothing of the principles of growth earning bread by performing an operation, the meaning of which he poorly understands and which is, after his way of thinking, put in his way by a power more or less, the power called Capital. He does not know what it is all about and nobody takes the trouble to explain it to him. Put this man on a piece of land, let him learn the principal of growth and if he has brains he will soon realize that he has capital, that he is doing exactly what the managers of the business he is employed in is doing, that he has the same problems that he has, that the things that defeat him are in danger of defeating them. His whole point of view is necessarily changed. He become infinitely more intelligent worker, more cooperative. One of the
examples of this that I have come across in my industrial visiting was given me by a head of an industrial relations department in a Southern factory. This factory was one of a chain, which ran through St. Louis, Cleveland, Brooklyn, Atlanta, and possibly other points that I do not remember. In 1920, the business which had been exceedingly prosperous during the War, suffered a slump. The demand fell off after such a way that it was impossible to keep the factory on anything like full time. The only way to keep it open for three or four days was to lower the wages to something like prewar level. The Industrial Manager was one of those who believed that no change should be made in conditions wages, hours, without full explanation to the workers. Accordingly he made his rounds. He laid the situation before the workers in one of the cities. There were men and women who had been bought up in cities and had always worked in factories. They had the point of view that they were victims of a vague and all-powerful ogre, - Capital. It was suggested that their days of labor be shortened, their wages lowered. It was because this greedy ogre would starve to death unless they accepted. They refused to accept the change, went on strike and the factory was closed. The managers experience in the Southern factory was quite different. Here he dealt with a body of workers that, without exception, had more or less to do with the land. Most of them had been mountain folk who had come down to the Southern factories, not to stay as a rule, but to earn money to build better homes, educate their children. When the Manager came to these people and told them that the conditions of the market had been cut off - the market for cotton had been cut off, they had seen their cotton lay in winter on the verandars of their cabins and they knew that when there was no buyers you cannot expect money to come in - they accepted the situation, three or four days a week work, and that factory weathered the storm. I believe that almost invariably this is the experience that the body of workers have, who have had land experience, if, of course, they have a sufficiently enlightened employer to do as this man did, and put the facts before the. This is Mr. Ford's notion.