

## TEACHING A "PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS" POLITICAL ECONOMY.

A knowledge of political economy does not seem to be required of all professors of political economy in every university. Thus, in the **University of Cincinnati**, the gentleman filling that position denies the possibility of remedying, through legislation, existing economic injustice. Of course, the professor is entitled to his opinion, but the university is a public institution maintained by taxation. Consequently every citizen is interested in seeing that teachers employed are competent to instruct students in the branches of knowledge assigned to them to impart. When a professor furnishes evidence of lack of information concerning facts, which one should have who is posted in the science that he is supposed to teach, then it is time for those who contribute to his salary to complain.

In **Professor Hicks'** case a complaint was made by **Daniel Kiefer** in a public letter as follows:

*If Professor Frederick C. Hicks, Professor of Economics at the University of Cincinnati, has been correctly quoted, then in justice to the students, the Professor should first take a course under a competent instructor himself before again facing a class.*

*That the Professor evidently is not entirely ignorant of that science is clear from the fact that he realizes that there "is not that perfect distribution of the products of labor which is fair to everyone." But that seems to be the extent of his knowledge. Of the underlying causes which prevent a fair distribution, he apparently knows nothing, although the science of political economy makes that clear.*

*The Professor's lack of economic knowledge is made clear in his suggestion of a remedy for unfair distribution. He says:*

*"The remedy is individual. No laws can force it. It must spring from the desire of every man to treat fairly his fellow man."*

*Let us see. Suppose every man became desirous today to treat fairly his fellow man, and no change whatever would be made in existing laws. Of course that implies that with all their desire to treat each other fairly, no man would know any more than Professor Hicks about the economic effect of existing laws or the need of a change to bring about a fair distribution. A simple desire to deal fairly, combined with economic ignorance, could do no more than cause men to voluntarily forego personal advantages for the sake of fairness. All employers, for instance, would decide to double, treble or quadruple wages. Professor Hicks does not seem to know enough about economic principles to see that this would force to the wall the great mass of employers who have now a hard time to make ends meet. Every man, knowing no more than Professor Hicks about political economy, would return for taxation the exact value of all the property he owned. The result would be, as a study*

of political economy will show Professor Hicks, a strengthening of already existing tendencies of the general property tax to check industry and to penalize thrift and enterprise. There would of course be some increase in taxation of vacant land under these circumstances, which, for economic reasons—that will be plain enough to the Professor after he has studied political economy—would tend to make things better. But as this would only take a small part of the rental value, this tendency would be overcome by the tremendous increase in values due to natural causes connected with the great moral improvement. These natural causes, the Professor will learn on getting as much knowledge of economic principles as is possessed by every competent real estate man, are that all great improvements, such as the universal moral uplift imagined, must increase general productive powers, make the use of land more profitable, and increase its value. This would give to land owners an even more unfair share, than at present, in distribution.

Even without a knowledge of political economy, Professor Hicks might be able to see that he would find it more desirable to live in a community where people were inclined to be fair with each other than in one where they were not. He might even see, that with other things equal in the two communities, he would be willing to pay more to live in the fair-minded community, and whether he would or not he would certainly be asked to do so.

So with adverse economic causes at work, about which Professor Hicks will learn on studying political economy—

universal desire of men to deal fairly with one another must come to naught.

These causes are due to laws which must be abolished before any such desire can be put into practice. Besides, the desire to deal fairly can be more easily produced by making conditions so that it will pay rather than by leaving them so that it will not. That is what the Single Tax will do. Only those misrepresent advocates of it as claiming it to be a panacea who, like Professor Hicks, know little or nothing about it.

What the Single Tax will do to bring about a fair distribution is that it will make any effort at unfair distribution unprofitable.

A study of economic principles will show Professor Hicks that no change in human nature, as he suggests, is needed to bring about economic justice. All that is necessary is to remove premiums on unfairness, which present laws offer.

If the University of Cincinnati were a Rockefeller institution, Cincinnatians might have to be content with instruction of this kind to their sons and daughters, but as one taxpayer, I protest against the city's money being so flagrantly misused as in the salary paid to Professor F. C. Hicks.

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