

Mr. Smith left his friend, plainly bewildered. It was clear that in the sum agreed to by Jones, the cheque for which rested in his pocket, were included all the taxes paid to the city. Yet it was clear, too, that he was charging twice over for these items. For in the itemized bill drawn up by his ingenious friend these charges stared him in the face.

A second visit to his collecting agent called forth a smile from that person which developed into a loud guffaw when Smith laid the itemized bill upon his desk.

"Well, what do you say to it?" asked Smith.

"Just this," said his collecting agent. "It's all so. These are all items properly charged to Jones. Whether you have a right to payment for these things, we won't argue. In theory the bill is all right. But, my dear Smith, we live in a practical world. You need the money. That's the answer."

And Smith left, wondering if that really was the answer.

JOSEPH DANA MILLER.

## The Class Conflict and Revolution

ANY inquiry into the desirability of radical economic reforms ought to involve, as a first step, a consideration of the nature of the economic system in and through which the people of the modern world carry on their struggle for the means of existence. For unless we suppose this system to be the best possible, it ought clearly to be either modified in greater or less degree or superseded. And whether either sort of change ought to be brought about by any proposed method, can hardly be intelligently decided without an understanding of the fundamental nature of the system of which the modification or supersession is contemplated.

It is the failure clearly to comprehend the nature of the faults of the existing economic system which has, in large part, made protest and even revolt ordinarily so futile in really improving the conditions of life for the common man to the extent that might else be possible. Protestant or revolutionary groups have to meet, always, the more or less solid opposition of the groups whose interests are threatened by change and who know well how to protect these interests.

Individual members of the conservative groups may be liberal-minded enough to favor reforms of a palliative sort, especially as many of these reforms seem likely to cost them nothing. But few members of the conservative, property-owning class seem able to contemplate without a sense of shock or a feeling of indignation any proposal seriously to disturb in its fundamentals that order or system of things—the existing system of private property—in the meshes of which they have been bred and to which they seem mainly to owe their material well-being. To the support of this system in general they will usually rally. We need not suppose that they understand it in the sense of being able to contemplate philosophically its faults and its virtues.

But they are not devoid of an understanding of how it works to maintain them and of how to make the most, in argument, of certain of its apparent advantages.

Reputable economists in plenty (not all economists, however) are at hand to support them and to make plausible by manifold arguments of ingenious intricacy the claim that the present scheme of things is good for the masses and that, anyway, the views of those who attack it are associated with this or that "now generally discredited" doctrine and so "fall to the ground" and "need not be further considered." Young economists not infrequently get the impression from their teachers that certain views are commonly rejected by reputable members of the craft, and deem it not worth while to investigate them. Subconsciously they come to feel that these views would be likely to put them "outside the pale."

A task more difficult than that of the defenders of the present system confronts those iconoclastic dissentients who must, to be successful, get another system put in its place. These dissentients have to rally the elements of discontent, of which, presumably, they are a part, to the support of a more or less definite programme. But these elements of discontent are more or less composed of the relatively untrained masses; hence they are even less likely than the sufficiently ignorant propertied classes to understand the inner nature of those arrangements which the propertied classes defend and which it appears to be the interest of the masses to attack; and they cannot be expected to have a very intelligent comprehension of the kinds of change needed or of the type of system which may best be substituted for the one we have.

The protesting masses are likely to be attracted by something which sounds radical, which appears to uproot the whole present scheme of things but which, in fact, cannot be made to work successfully in the existing state of human nature. They are too likely to be the prey of the demagogue or the fanatic. With a sense of having been unjustly ground down by an economic system which has made others prosperous, they are likely to favor absolute equality of incomes, regardless of differences in efficiency, or to follow a Marxian philosophy and wish to terminate all incomes from property just because these are not labor incomes. If the propertyless masses succeed in acquiring temporary control through revolution, they are likely to blunder from one radical step to another without adequate regard to those elements of human nature which make some things workable and others not, until the general turmoil and poverty and disorganization discredit them far enough to put their deposed masters back into the economic saddle.

Again, oftentimes a group of the propertied classes is enabled to use the ignorance and discontent of the propertyless as a means of further lining their own pockets even at the expense, partially, of the rest of the propertied classes, as well as at the expense of the masses. Thus, the tariff protected interests of a country, through their organizations and organs, make it appear to millions of workingmen that free traders are aristocratic enemies who would take the bread from their mouths to benefit foreigners, and that

a high tariff system is a necessary means of providing workmen with jobs. Or these property owners who are in debt and who can gain at the expense of other property owners (their creditors) by a depreciation of the monetary standard, may sometimes succeed in rallying to their support millions of wage earners to whom such depreciation will mean, chiefly, increased cost of living with no corresponding rise in wages.

It is not only the propertyless masses who can be thus put into a false position. Class prejudice sometimes makes opponents of those whose interests, in a specific reform, are the same as the interests of the masses. In the case of a protest against various abuses in the system of property, which, if effective, would limit mainly the incomes of the wealthy few, these few are able to lure to their support thousands of small property owners who might even stand to gain by the proposed change, but whose prejudices are those of the larger owners of property and who are easily roused to a martial spirit by anything which can be made to appear to them as a threat against a system of things which they have learned to regard as sacred.

And so, many of the great mass movements which seem to be democratic movements, lose themselves in fallacies and confusions and never even temporarily gain their objectives or, if their objectives are gained, temporarily, become soon discredited and fall back out of the rays of power and into obscurity.

Real democracy is, therefore, to the aspiring masses, as is the mirage to the worn traveller in the desert—a hope, whose realization appears perpetually to recede. Real democracy, in the circumstances of class interest and class prejudice, must wait upon some development of intelligent understanding of the economic system we now have and of the economic forces at work in that system, on the part of those who are its victims.

For, so long as the exploited groups in society cannot themselves successfully conduct and guide a social and economic system, so long as they or their leaders do not understand the faults of the system against which they protest, well enough, specifically enough, and discriminatingly enough to make workable reforms, so long as they are intellectually incapable of doing aught but lumping together for elimination unlike types of incomes, and so long as their revolts are likely to be directed by demagogues, fools, or the hired tools of interested parties and to result in a turbulence and economic breakdown which brings poverty even to themselves and discredit to their movement, worth-while reform is not to be expected or hoped for. Aristocratic economic relations must continue, even if they coexist incongruously with democratic political institutions. The exploited masses, being unable to evolve a better system, must needs accept a system which offers to a privileged class gains adequate to give such a class sufficient motive for maintaining the system in regular operation, with a due amount of law and order.

HARRY GUNNISON BROWN,

author of "The Theory of Earned and Unearned Incomes."

## What the Professor is Saying

IN our last issue was printed a striking cartoon illustrating the economic and fiscal situation. Standing on a volume of political economy a professor is exhorting his hearers. Just what he is saying is left to the imagination. A copy of the Single Tax Five Year Book was offered for the best answer to the question, "What Is the Professor saying?" A number of answers have been received. The winner is Mr. W. F. Burgener, of Norwalk, California. The second place is accorded to our old friend, J. W. Bengough, of Toronto. The shortest of the imaginary speeches was that submitted by Harry W. Olney: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

Mr. Burgener thinks that the professor has been misrepresented in the cartoon, and of course it is conceivable that he is saying what Mr. B. represents him as saying. In view of the loss of several professorships recently we now await with some trepidation the news of what may happen to the unnamed professor of the cartoon! We hope that Mr. Burgener has considered the need of making provision for him and his family when his identity is discovered and the speech made public.

MR. W. F. BURGNER

FELLOW Citizens: Uncle Sam's policy of allowing land to be kept idle for speculation purposes, and penalizing industry with taxes, is the cause of involuntary idleness, crime and suffering with which human society is afflicted. It is also the cause of the high cost of living. Speculation is the art of reducing wages and the price of products to the lowest point at which laborers will consent to reproduce their kind, while the price to the consumer is increased by all the traffic will bear, both the producer and the consumer being caught between the upper and nether millstone.

"It will thus be seen that speculation works harm and harm only, for the speculator himself is constantly on the ragged edge of failure, since he must operate on the widest margin possible, lest some other speculator steal a march on him, and he himself be precipitated in the common ruin. If speculation in products is utterly harmful, then speculation in the source of products, namely land, must be even more harmful.

"Speculation in products and speculation in land itself are the evils of the present day. Speculation in products is caused by monopoly in the control of production or transportation. In speculation in land the profit is not realized by increasing the supply of land, or by improvements in or on it, but by limiting the area of land available for production, through high rents and high price for land.

"By holding some land out of use for speculation, speculation in the products of land is made easier. So long as land can be bought and sold for a price, so long will land speculation continue. As I have said, the profit in land speculation is not in products in or on the land, but is due to the appropriation for privat