

Does Teaching College Economics Make Communists Thru Default?

[Following are a few remarks from a talk made by Professor Harry Gunnison Brown in St. Louis at the winter term graduation exercises of the Henry George School.]

ECONOMICS textbooks and economics teachers, though they devote considerable time and space to relatively inconsequential topics, frequently give no attention at all to the land question and the effects that land value taxation would have on the operation of our economic system.

"Students in Economics and in Public Finance at the University of Missouri are more interested in the part of the work dealing with the taxation of land values than in any other part. From time to time one of them tells me that he wanted to take the course because he had heard about this part of it. Any adequate presentation of the land question reaches for fundamentals. It stirs discussion. It is dramatic. The students talk about it outside of class, in their 'bull sessions.' They try to explain the philosophy of land value taxation to others, not taking the course. Recently one of my students told me that the land question 'is the most discussed question on this campus.' Teachers who omit, or almost omit, this part of economics, can scarcely hope, if other things are at all equal, to make their courses as interesting to their student customers.

"Statements made to me by a number of economics teachers (who themselves would rather not have it so) are to the effect that students of economics in our various colleges — especially those of some social idealism — tend to accept a combination of Keynesian economics and traditional socialism.

"The influence of American economics professors has spread widely. Students have come from far countries to study at American universities and especially at the larger prestige institutions, such as Columbia University. There students from the Chinese Republic (the founder of which, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, was greatly impressed by Henry George's contribution to economics and wished to make some application of Henry George's principles to Chinese taxation policy) have been indoctrinated with a contrary philosophy and have returned to China to teach this contrary philosophy.

"The graduates of our universities and colleges are but poorly armed against the propaganda of Communists and Socialists when they can oppose to the optimistically idealized program of a regimented economy only the existing caricature of what capitalism could be at its possible best. *Why are they not shown the intriguing blueprint of a free private enterprise system clearly worth fighting for?*

"If the great majority of the teachers of economics in the universities and colleges of the United States were convinced Communists desirous of following 'the party line,' if the leaders of the party in Moscow were seeking to corrupt capitalism into as poor a system as it could be made, in order that it might operate so badly as to provoke revolution, and if the Communist leaders had, for that very reason, given to all Communist teachers of economics definite instructions either to keep students from even thinking about the land value tax program or to cast discredit on it, the situation as regards education of university and college students on land rent and its taxation could hardly be worse than it actually is."