

"A MONKEY WITH A MICROSCOPE"By - James C. Carson

As a result of the great fear of the growth of communism in this country, one of the more popular remedies backed by the great vote is the hunting down and punishing of traitors in government. Little thought is given to the conditions producing the communist and how to remedy them. Last year, a nation-wide survey by the Opinion Research Corporation of Princeton revealed 55% of our high school seniors agree with Karl Marx's socialist theory of "the fairest economic system is the one that takes from each according to his ability and gives to each according to his need." 28% of the teachers interviewed went along with Marx's contention.

When we consider that Alger Hiss, a bright, likeable fellow is a product of our educational system and that the youngsters in high school will shortly begin to staff our business and industrial establishments and enter government service and head families of their own, the failure of our schools and colleges to immunize our young against the brightly-colored fallacies of the communist philosophy becomes all the more a challenge to those of us from an older school who, like Tom Jefferson, believe the less government the better and in Jefferson's maxim of "equal rights for all; special privilege for none."

Why have our schools and colleges failed to educate our young in the fundamentals of our national heritage? I would illustrate the cause of their failure with the following account of what happened at the University of California March 9, 1877. The University was young and did not have a chair of political economy. When plans were made to establish one, Henry George, who had proved his threefold power as original thinker, writer, and speaker, was suggested for the chair.

George's familiarity with economics as eviced in "Our Land and Land Policy" and his long record of thoughtful editorials won him an invitation to deliver several lectures at Berkely before the students and faculty. George had had a long-time ambition to wear a skullcap, and he took much care in preparing his first lecture entitled, "The Study of Political Economy."

His lecture was a masterpiece on the subject, and it was probably the most sensible ever delivered in that place. He covered many phases of economy, but I would like to call attention to two of the points raised in his address. The first reveals why real political economy has been clouded over and ignored in our schools and colleges for many years until today the communist philosophy has won over a majority of our young, mostly by default of our defenders. The second gives us a view of George's theory of education. The quotations from his address follow:

"The very importance of the subjects with which political economy deals raises obstacle in its way...The conclusions of political economy involve pecuniary interests and thus thrill the sensitive pocket-nerve. For, as no social adjustment can exist without interesting a larger or small class in its maintenance, political economy at every point is apt to come in contact with some interest or other which regards it as the silversmiths of Ephesus did those who taught the uselessness of presenting shrines to Diana.

"Macaulay has well said that, if any large pecuniary interest were concerned in denying the attraction of gravitation, that most obvious of physical facts would not lack disputers. This is just the difficulty that has beset and still besets the progress of political economy.

"And the man who is, or who imagines that he is, interested in the maintenance of a protective tariff, may accept all your professors choose to tell him about the composition of the sun or the evolution of species, but, no matter how clearly you demonstrate the wasteful inutility of hampering commerce, he will not be convinced.

"And so, to the man who expects to make money out of a railroad subsidy, you will in vain try to prove that such devices to change the natural direction of labor and capital must cause more loss than gain. What, then, must be the opposition which inevitably meets a science that deals with tariffs and subsidies, with banking interests and bonded debts, with trade unions and combinations of capital with taxes and licenses and land tenures! It is not ignorance alone that offers opposition, but ignorance backed by interest, and made fierce by passions!"

Speaking of education, the statement of which knocked all chance forever of his becoming a professor, George said, "For the study of political economy you need no special knowledge, no extensive library, no costly laboratory. You do not even need textbooks or teachers, if you will but think for yourselves. All that you need is care in reducing complex phenomena to their elements, in distinguishing the essential from the accidental and in applying the simple laws

of human action with which are familiar...All this array of professors, all this paraphernalia of learning cannot educate a man.

"A monkey with a microscope, a mule packing a library, are fit emblems of the men--and, unfortunately, they are plenty--who pass through the whole educational machinery and come out but learned fools, crammed with knowledge which they cannot use--all the more they pass, with themselves and others, as educated men...

"You are of the favored few, for the fact that you are here, students in a university of this character, bespeaks for you the happy accidents that fall only to the lot of the few, and you cannot yet realize...how the hard struggle which is the lot of so many may cramp and blind and distort--how it may dull the noblest faculties and chill the warmest impulses, and grind out of men the joy and poetry of life; how it may turn into the lepers of society those who should be its adornment, and transmute into vermin to prey upon it and into wild beasts to fly at its throat, the brain and muscle that should go to its enrichment!

"If you will think of it, you cannot fail to see enough want and wretchedness, even in our own country today, to move you to sadness and pity, to nerve you to high resolve; to arouse in you the sympathy that dares, and the indignation that burns to overthrow a wrong...Would you...relieve distress...eradicate ignorance...extirpate vice? You must turn to political economy to know their causes, that you may lay the axe to the root of the evil tree."

George's address was received with polite and dignified attention on the part of the faculty, and even with some enthusiasm by the students. While he touched on detailed questions of political economy in a most masterful way, this "monkey with a microscope," the "mule packing a library," the questioning of "educational machinery" and "learned fools" was too much.

Two years after the lecture at Berkely, George came out with his masterpiece PROGRESS & POVERTY, a gem that will rank high in the annals of human literature. Had he put on a skullcap and dettled down at Berkely, the chances are high George and his great gifts as a thinker would have been buried alive--as has happened to many and many a bright fellow--and the world would never have known one of the greatest philosophers of all time.

I have contended Henry George came on a 150 years ahead of his time, but with the inventions of the atomic and hydrogen bombs and whispers of greater horrors to come, it would seem to me that it is high time our educational institutions, our churches and our newspapers woke up to the fact that if we ever want to have real freedom, real liberty as proclaimed by Tom Jefferson and other great ones, we had better give recognition to some simple, practical political economy.

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