

Land and Freedom

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Comment and Reflection

THE *New York Evening Journal* says editorially: "Political economy is a difficult subject, one about which nobody really *knows* anything." And the average man reading all these learned treatises, and not thinking very deeply for himself, must conclude that this is so—that few of these fellows really know anything about the science they write about.

HERE, for example, is a book by Prof. W. C. Mitchell. The author is said to be "internationally famous as an expert on the business cycle." What is the business cycle? One of the chapters is entitled, "How Prosperity Breeds a Crisis." This is the way it does it. As prosperity increases wages rise and the cost of doing business increases. There is then a decline in efficiency because jobs are now more numerous than men, and men cannot therefore be driven at top speed. And when under the compulsion of prosperity press of orders occur, waste creeps in. And more of the same rubbish. When were jobs more numerous than men? And what are wages? And how can increase of real wages bring about a crisis that ends in the decline of prosperity and ensuing hard times?

THIS is the nonsense that gets into print, parades with ostentation, and is the subject of congratulatory comment from professors in their mutual admiration coteries. Each one professes to see some great illumination in so-and-so's discovery, but qualifies this praise with several "buts," as "perhaps this distinction has been overlooked." Then follows some elaboration or "improvement" on the point expounded by the learned professor, at which all the other professors express unbounded admiration for the writer and his critic, not forgetting to introduce some further refinements of their own. "I cannot believe it," said Alice. "Then shut your eyes and breathe hard," said the queen.

OUR good friend and Single Taxer, J. B. Chamberlain, of Kensington, Md., in a little publication of his own, *The Truth Teller*, writes as follows:

Political Economy is referred to as a science but the palaver of the professors and writers who get a living from the pretense of a superior knowledge of our social affairs is far from scientific. One of them writes: "The transference of property to those who have not earned it,

however, is quite a matter for regulation in the general interest, subject to the fact that a total prohibition of transference would seriously maim the central principle of property, viz: the right and need to realize a conception of well being relevant to the relation which makes the individual in society what he is." This is ridiculous or profound according to the disposition and intelligence of the audience. Fellow professors enthuse over its perspicacity and literary charm but a bright "fresh" refers to it as "the cat's pajamas."

Another tells us that: "It is of superlative importance to recognize that a complete acceptance of the private and acquisitive point of view is the only procedure possible in the analysis of the phenomena of society organized upon lines of individual activity for private gain."

This sort of nonsense is fed to students in our colleges to divert their attention from fundamental truth.

IF no one really knows anything about political economy as the *Journal* insists, then it is the fault of the teachers. For it is a simple science—at all events, in its essentials. It has been called "the science of getting a living." Its major factors are few and their relations entirely plain. The operation of the laws of rent, interest and wages is visible to all who will look. If speculation in land lays a heavy tribute upon labor and capital, thus tending to interrupt the progress of industry by a toll just sufficiently excessive to stop production, we have periods of industrial depression and the end of prosperity. There is no mystery about it. If some men get what they do not earn then those who earn must get less to live upon, less to move the wheels of industry, less wealth and capital, in short. In words of one syllable this can be taught to children by one who will essay the task and abandon this learned nonsense of "business cycles" and clouds of words that leave us gasping for breath.

ONE of the shrewdest political observers of England, "Senex," in the leading editorial in the *Middleton Guardian*, comments on the proposed political alliance consummated at the recent Cheltenham Co-operative Congress between the Labor party and the co-operators. The vote was 1960 in favor to 1843 opposed. The opponents of the resolution indicated that out of more than 1300 societies affiliated with the Co-operative Union only 600 were represented at the Congress.

THIS wise comment is made by "Senex": It may be fairly assumed that the combination with the Co-operationists will bring into the Socialist ranks a large element that is at heart essentially conservative; and this,