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**Interesting People: LEWIS JEROME JOHNSON**  
**By Walter Lippmann**

CIVIL engineer and civic engineer, builder of the Harvard Stadium, leader in the Single Tax movement, author of an ideal charter for the city of Cambridge, propagandist for everything he believes in: Prof. Lewis Jerome Johnson of Harvard University is a tornado of efficient enthusiasm sweeping out the cobwebs of petty doubts, and the whole litter and rubbish of habits, caste-feeling, prejudice and snobbishness.

His pupils seem middle-aged and settled by comparison. He makes most people feel as if they were about half alive. Come within radiating distance of him, and if you have time to think of yourself, you'll feel like a listless, anemic putterer. In a few minutes you'll hear him go at a vested stupidity and smash it with a bludgeon of genial indignation which makes you want to laugh for joy at the sport of it. On top of indignation comes enthusiasm over a piece of democratic good news from Vancouver or Denmark, explained and expounded in spite of dinner, other engagements, and the routine of things. "Oh," he sighed to me once, "I can't stand it. Life's getting loo interesting for me."

He hails you from across the street as you go sauntering along worrying about yourself. "You know," he will say, "the Grand Junction scheme for the recall is better than the Los Angeles one. Look here," and he fishes out of his green students' bag, charts, statistics, newspaper reports, and proves it to you then and there in the sunshine with the cars clanging by.

But his energy doesn't sputter. It has the quality of completing effectively whatever it undertakes. In the city of Cambridge they need among other things a new charter, for the present one is obviously a treasure for the Historical Society which preserves so carefully the Washington Elm and the minds of some of the

inhabitants. So with a few others, principally engineers like himself, he set to work to draw up for Cambridge the most democratically efficient charter it was possible to devise. He went for his inspiration and for his models to the experiments of democrats the world over—to New Zealand, and Switzerland, to Des Moines, to U'Ren's work in Oregon. He studied their failures and their successes, and he helped write a charter based on their experience.

"But," protested a Boston banker, "it's all very well in New Zealand and Switzerland, but that doesn't prove it'll work in Massachusetts."

"Well, it works in Oregon, doesn't it?"

"Ah yes," replied the practical man to the theorist, "but Oregon isn't Massachusetts."

"I tell you," said Johnson, "what kind of proof you want. You want me to prove that it has worked well in Massachusetts for a hundred years. Then you'll be convinced that it'll work well in Massachusetts. You're not from Missouri: you're from Massachusetts."

He told about this encounter at a dinner of more or less radical college students. "It's high time," he continued, "that the applied scientist took a hand in politics. We engineers are taught to make things for people to use and enjoy. We build bridges for men, not for dividends. When government is handled as an applied science, our politics will be as good as our bridges."

Men are bothered at first by all the precision and accuracy and efficiency of minds like his. They wonder, as I did, whether it means not only the end of waste and confusion but of beauty too, and the sense of wonder.

On the night of President Lowell's inauguration we marched to the Stadium by classes, carrying torches. There was a good deal of parading, and cheering, and speech-making. I met Professor Johnson the next day, and asked him what he thought of our performance.

"Well, to tell you the truth, I didn't see much of it. I was watching the Stadium." It was the first time I had heard him comment about the thing he had built. "I was looking at the sweep of it. It was fine by the October light." I was satisfied, assured that the precision and accuracy of the scientist is coming not only to end waste, but to create things of use, and to enjoy them in their highest use, which is beauty.