

Why Not Educate the Professors?

PROF. IRVING FISHER, of Yale University is reported to have made some interesting statements last month before the American Economic Association:—

"An urgent need in my opinion, he said, is some machinery for diffusing economic principles among the masses of our population. The common people, whose ideas will, more and more, rule the world, are in crying need of competent instruction in economics." Apparently not satisfied with the present educational institutions, newspapers, popular journals and such extensive advertising campaigns as preached to the people from every wall and fence and even wrote its maxims over the landscape, Prof. Fisher proposes a new and more expensive machine. "Expensive research, he says, far beyond the reach of the professor's purse, is necessary if the economist is to be of any important public service in studying wealth distribution, the profit system, the problem of labor unrest and the many other pressing practical problems."

The coming rule of the common people is making some other people nervous.

The solicitude of Prof. Fisher for the economic education of these coming rulers is almost pathetic. The situation is, indeed, embarrassing; for the would-be educators have to acknowledge that, before they can be "of any important public service," they themselves must be educated!

Before the "expensive research" rather ingenuously asked for by Prof. Fisher is authorized, might it not fairly be asked of the Economic Faculties of the country, upon which vast sums have already been spent, that they first come to an agreement themselves as to fundamental, primary economics,—such as the economic relation of man to the earth, the cause and character of rent, the natural measure of wages, interest, profits and rent? To elucidate these issues calls for no great expenditure for technical equipment and research, but simply and solely the application of undistorted human reason to the every-day facts of our environment. And until these elemental, basic issues have been definitely settled, economics has no assured foundation upon which any people, common or uncommon, can build.

And yet, upon these simple basic issues, all that the nation gets from its economic teachers is an anarchy of opinion and a confused babel of voices. The common people could do no worse.

CHILD labor is considered by many criminologists as one of the greatest causes of child delinquency. Among several hundred inmates of a New York Juvenile Asylum it was discovered that all came of poor parents and that the average age at which these children were sent out to work was eleven years and nine months. One hundred and five were newsboys. Some started to work at six, and one at four. Truly our civilization is a massacre of its innocents.

What About Our National Highways

THE neglect of our public highways has long been a standing reproach to our capacity as a people for co-operative action toward common ends. The "King's Highways" of old Europe, in their planning and execution, put to shame the highways of our boastful democracy. Efficient self-government, when put to the test of achievement, is apparently still in America a remote ideal.

The wasteful haphazard of our railway development is only equalled by the chaos that reigns over our common roadways. It would seem hopeless to introduce system into either. The emergency of war forced momentarily a unified control over the railroads. The return of peace will, in all probability, unless by a miracle larger ideas prevail, sacrifice once more this important community service to the scramble of private interests and the immoral manipulations of Wall St.

Will a better fate meet the attempt now being made by the National Highways Association, under the presidency of Charles H. Davis, to rouse our Federal and State governments to co-ordinated action in the matter of our common roads and highways?

It has two points in favor of his success. The first is that the making and exploiting of the common roads as a private investment is not attractive and therefore, leaves the movement unembarrassed by ambitious promoters of such enterprises. Secondly, the execution of the work at government or public expense offers, under our pernicious fiscal system, big inducements to speculative realty interests. It is true that, in its financial scheme for the construction of the roads, the National Highways Association proposes to secure by purchase a narrow belt of land along both sides of the new highways, thus retaining for the government part of the expected increment of value created by the improvement. This might, at first sight, appear as likely to provoke the opposition of the realty interests. We think not, however. An attractive turn-over in the sale of lands to the government would hardly be resisted. Besides, it is well known that the huge increases in land values occur not so much along the highways themselves as at the terminal or critical points, which are not within the scope of the Association's financial plan. There is, it seems to us, no serious objection to the scheme, but rather much to recommend it, in the eyes of the speculative realty interests. If these interests are wise, they will back up the National Highways Association to the utmost. It will boom land values as few schemes outside of railroad promotion have ever done.

The scheme undoubtedly will increase the efficiency of America's industrial and commercial equipment. It brings her, however, no nearer to the open door of opportunity. Will the National Highways Association not lend the

strength of its great organization to completing its own conception by demanding the release of ALL lands served by the proposed system of highways, from the present fiscal handicaps on production? Better highways are an invitation to more production. Why not recognize this logical relation? Why should production be charged with costs which revert to the advantage of non-productive interests? Why not, in short, concentrate on a demand for a Federal Land Tax, out of which the cost of the roads could be paid? For State roads, a State Land Tax. Speculative realty interests might be less enthusiastic over the Association's project. On the other hand, the great productive interests of the country would rally to its support.

The Association's scheme, as it now stands, is a pretty clear case of putting the cart before the horse. Of course, most public improvements are hitched up that way. But that makes it no more efficient and no less absurd.

The Land Question Before the Peace Congress

Introduced by Mexico

DIPLOMATIC reserve on the part of the governments more immediately involved has kept from publicity the official documents recently exchanged regarding the serious international controversy over the Mexican Oil Land legislation.

The controversy, however, is now to be transferred to the world Conference at Paris. Mexico has nominated her delegates in the case, and hopes to provoke an international decision confirming her contention as to the sovereignty of States over the soil within their territory.

The issue is one in which Single Taxers have a very special interest. The Mexican Government makes the old and dangerous claim to titular ownership; whereas Single Taxers believe that essential sovereignty does not call for titular ownership, but is amply satisfied by payment into the public treasury of all social values attaching to the soil. The government has also, in its representation of the whole people, the sovereign prescriptive right to interdict such wasteful or otherwise improper use of natural resources as might prejudice the well being of the present and future generations. The destruction of our own American forests, without any provision for replanting, was a criminal abuse of private ownership and a criminal neglect of sovereignty on the part of the State. The case of our own oil resources is almost identical. The principle of conservation, which should inspire our Government, has been a dead letter. If, in this respect, the Mexican Government desires to act on a higher plane of public interest, we, who have wasted our opportunities, have no right to object.

The Mexican Government has an unequalled opportunity for conciliating democratic opinion in all countries and provoking an international pronouncement that would

be a real gain in the conception and exercise of essential sovereignty for all nations. To accomplish this requires but a slight re-adjustment of Mexico's claims, attested to by an equivalent re-adjustment of her disputed legislative action.

In the first place, she should define her claim to sovereignty over the soil as limited to the public values attached thereto, and to the right of intervention in order to prevent wasteful and abusive exploitation of natural resources. In the second place, the claim should be made, not in respect of any particular section of the soil but in respect to the whole.

In such a claim, and for legislation embodying its principles, Mexico would, as we have said, have the support of all democratic peoples and have fairly earned the unique and enviable honor of writing into the history of the world a new Magna Charta for mankind. There exist no reputable interests compromised by such a proposal nor any others powerful enough effectively to oppose it. It can be defeated only by its own advocates confusing it with extraneous and irrelevant, if not antagonistic, issues.

Single Taxers throughout the world will do well to watch carefully the course of proceedings at Paris, in this great debate as to the relations of individuals and their governments to the soil, the fundamental question in economics, whose just solution is the imperative condition of human progress.

Samuel Milliken

IN December we lost one of our most able and tireless workers for the Single Tax in the death of Samuel Milliken, of Philadelphia. He became interested in the movement over thirty years ago after being convinced of the truth and importance of the cause by reading "Progress and Poverty" which was a great inspiration to him. By years of practice he became the most able and active writer on the philosophy of Henry George in his native city. In addition to hundreds of articles on Single Tax, Free Trade and other subjects he was the principal contributor to the "Mail Bag" of *The Philadelphia Record*, one of the leading morning papers of large circulation.

Once Mr. Milliken, who was of modest and retiring disposition, suggested to the editorial manager of *The Record* that it might be well for him to take a rest as perhaps it would be better not to publish any more of his letters for awhile. He was promptly told that they were glad to get all the letters he would write for them.

During the Delaware Campaign, Mr. Milliken gave a year's work as secretary at headquarters without a cent of salary and contributed in money besides.

Brilliant as a thinker and writer, scholarly, modest, a devoted and earnest worker, Samuel Milliken was one of those rare souls of which it can truly be said, "Well done, good and faithful servant." He has gone from among us but the good he has done will remain.

WM. L. ROSS.