

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