

Injecting the Irritant

by NOAH D. ALPER

MOST people concerned with education readily admit that we need, not merely more education but a better quality as well; and that we need more and better education in particular areas and in times of specific trouble. Today especially, we need a better quality of economic science education.

Economic science philosophy, however good, cannot enter the mind in an instant, as a thought can. The first step in the process is the planting of the seed in soil made fertile by a desire for this knowledge. Once the seed enters the soil it begins its mental sprouting and progressing towards a satisfactory crop of knowledge its possessor can use. Such ideas, like the pearls in the oyster, may be the result of an irritant taken into the mind.

As a result of our experience in St. Louis, we can say with certainty that the process of injecting economic science will not be easy—however, it can be done. The Public Revenue Education Council is based on an idea associated with man's most universal economic experience—taxation. The ultimate purpose is to induce action which will lead to the substitution of natural public revenue for what is properly and morally natural private revenue, now so largely collected by direct and indirect taxation to support the government.

A public relations type of educational process can most quickly and surely achieve such an objective. Mankind's long-held opinions on taxation have dominated people so long that minds seem closed to new ideas, either because of apathy or because so many

Noah D. Alper, director of the St. Louis extension, is deeply concerned about the social benefits of taxation reform, and he knows the importance of "strategy."

In 1935 he gave up his work in St. Louis to join Judge Jackson H. Ralston in a campaign to introduce, in California, a strong measure of tax repeal with land rent wealth provided as the substitute. This was the last of seven similar attempts, which ran from local option in taxation, to outright abolition of all taxes with the only permissible income of government being the rental value of land.

The first time the measure was placed on the ballot the Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional because of defects in the "short title." In the second instance, permission for it to remain on the ballot came too late. This, he says, is part of the strategy of landlordism.

Noah D. Alper is president of the Public Revenue Education Council in St. Louis.

know for certain so much that is not true. Such attitudes suggest the universal confusion of "brainwashing" by perpetual tax mis-education and false propaganda.

In the fundamental economics classes of the Henry George School a clear and simple picturization of the basic structure of economic science appears on the blackboard and in the lesson sheets, showing land, labor and capital as the factors of production—wealth as the product—and rent, wages and interest as the avenues of distribution.

This structure dictates the basic idea stressed by the PREC and the techniques of presenting it have been given much thought. This reveals to all who consider it carefully that what we term the *avenues* of distribution

are also, and at the same time, *sources* of public revenue.

All taxes, however and by whom-ever imposed, must draw from one of these sources. Because of the nature of capital and its origin, its function as a tool of production, and its direct relationship to labor, both labor and capital-owners belong to the labor family. For this reason, wages and interest can, as far as citizen understanding is concerned, be considered one *source*. We, therefore, call wages and interest by the term, "rewards of human effort." Thus to all practical purposes we reduce the sources of public revenue to two—rent of land and rewards of human effort.

Next we develop and point out the effects of the use of either of these sources on the well-being of the people and on the size, efficiency and functions of government. We show that by use of the proper source of public revenue, we can make it easier, rather than harder, for people to secure job opportunities and to enjoy the fruit of their labor: food, clothing, shelter, entertainment, luxuries and the cultural values of life.

The strategy of the PREC points up the natural and basic relationship of labor and capital-owners to each other and of both to land. Any student of economic science and social problems who uses the scientific method to seek out cause and effect and patterns of predictability, will be faced with the conclusion that the fundamental economic and moral interests of labor and capital-owners are mutual—one supporting the other.

In natural opposition to these are all title holders of land who seek to secure greater personal income by gross distortion of our tax structure. Their private collection of the rent of land, properly the natural revenue of government, forces the government to use taxes that collect wages and interest from labor and capital-owners. Therefore we suggest a "divide and conquer" strategy which would divide capitalists from the category known as privileged title-holders of land, in an effort to unite labor and capital in working for common public revenue interests.

The successful seed-idea that can start such a process, the PREC believes, is to point out the difference between man-made taxes and the natural, scientific *sources* of public revenue, as dictated by economic science. It must be shown, as we have repeatedly stated, that a tax is no more a source of public revenue than a pump is the source of the water it pumps—and that taxes are like pumps. Basically, therefore, education must be based on *sources* as dictated by economic science and morality, and not on *taxes* as dictated by viewpoint economics and selfish and immoral interests.

A clear understanding of sources would force a change in the tax thinking of our people that would eventually be reflected on ballots, for such an educational "missile" would expose communism and its enslavement of mankind. Finally it should produce a strong desire for lost freedoms and an organized effort to recapture economic liberty.



"Thomas J. Chambers, appointed a superior Judge in Texas in 1833, received as an annual salary, 132,840 acres of land. He was given title to the land although he never held court."

—From Believe It or Not

HENRY GEORGE NEWS