

Reaction, Obscurantism: Twins

By Henry Ware Allen

It has been truly said that there is nothing more obvious than that which at first appeared to be obscure. It is equally true that all problems are simple after they have been solved. De Kruif's book "Men Against Death" illustrates this fact repeatedly from the history of scientific discoveries in medicine, a salient feature of all these discoveries being the stubborn opposition to their acceptance by conservative leaders in medical science.

The same observation is still more true in reference to discoveries made in the more occult science of political economy and particularly so because the science of political economy is related more intimately than any other to vested rights, or more properly speaking, vested wrongs. In fact, the force of unwholesome conservatism has succeeded very well in promoting the fiction that there is no such thing as a science of political economy, that there are no inexorable natural laws to sustain such a science.

For illustration: Adam Smith dem-

onstrated that international free trade was socially beneficial, that it was in harmony with considerations of both justice and expediency. But, although free trade between the forty-eight states of our union has proved it to be advantageous for all, free trade between nations has been prevented by ever-increasing tariff walls. Again, Ricardo established the scientific soundness of the law of rent, in accordance with which economic rent cannot be shifted, proving conclusively that ground rent is from a scientific standpoint the ideal subject of taxation. Nevertheless, this law is disregarded the world over and governments continue to penalize prosperity by taxing the products of labor.

An even more important illustration of stupid conservatism against discoveries in the social sciences is the slow acceptance of and indifference to the discovery by Henry George of a great natural law, an understanding of which makes clear the real cause of industrial depressions and the way in which true prosperity may be made permanent. But in due course of time the truths of social science will make us free! See: "Progress and Poverty," pp. 482-488.