

Noah D. Alper's Brief Cases

RESURGENCE IN ATHENS

"Now if I was just interested in making money, I would go down and I would buy every piece of property that I could in Athens, Greece, because Athens will be another Acapulco. In ten years, a piece of property in Athens will be worth from ten to a hundred times as much." This was the confession of a millionaire, Charles Sopkin, from a book entitled *Money Talks*.

"LABOR FOR SALE"

"The Clayton Act states that 'the labor of a human being is not a commodity.' Then what is it?

"When you trace any product back far enough, it is composed of only two things—labor (mental and physical) and land (all raw materials). Thus when you buy anything, you are necessarily buying the human labor that transformed the raw materials into desired product.

"While a free human being is not himself a commodity, fortunately his labor is."

These quotations are from the May issue of *The Freeman* (p. 44) and are written by Dean Russell. When one buys electricity one does not buy the generating apparatus; nor does one buy the laborer when purchasing the energy of his labor and his skill. One wonders at the use of the word "free" in the thought, "that a free human being is not himself a commodity." Is a "not free" human being a commodity even if "the law" so treats him?

But of greater interest is the recognition of "labor (mental and physical) and land" (all raw materials) as the ingredient of all products. Tracing backward, is this not a recognition that taxes, regardless of names, classifications and where or by whom imposed, are the only possible sources of public revenue when we consider the relationship of labor and capital? Might not such a fact lead to a demand for a massive simplification of our tax structure, the abolition of hidden taxes, and the shifting of the burden from labor and land values, thus eliminating the need for political wars on poverty and unemployment in the process?

WHOSE ECONOMICS?

"Whose Economics Should Be Taught in the High Schools?" M. L. Frankel, in an address on this question, said "to put it bluntly, economic principles, like the facts of life, are what they are . . . Economics seeks to find the true answers to our problems; does not teach certain answers as ready-made truth.

"Economics is a discipline in ~~itself~~ ^{its own} right and is no respecter of persons—not a 'smorgasbord' that offers a variety of dishes to suit individual tastes. A decision to offer economics as part of a school program requires adherence to firm principles and a commitment to provide teacher competency in handling the subject matter."

According to this view, "economics itself is made up only of basic principles—principles that serve as guidelines for the analysis of economic problems . . . Economics simply is not a 'good' that can be separated into 'brand names' and merchandised as grocery items or appliances. One would never raise this kind of question in discussing physics, chemistry, mathematics, or foreign languages. Certainly there would be plenty of room to discuss the methods used to gain a command of any one of these disciplines, but there would be no differing of opinion on the concepts that are basic to such a discipline."

Many who are concerned with education may find this of interest, and the pamphlet containing the entire address by M. L. Frankel, director of the Joint Council on Economic Education, may be obtained free by writing to this council at 2 West 46th Street, New York, N. Y. 10036. Few will question the objectivity of the views expressed, but there is no assurance that the "missing ingredients" of the land-man relationship will not continue to be missing, as they are today.