

How To End Crooked Politics

(The 85th. weekly radio lecture by Editor L. D. Beckwith (The Forum and No Taxes), speaking as The Voice of Freedom, KWG, Stockton, Calif.)

In the last broadcast it was stated that there are five great social problems facing us; and that these can be solved by resort to the natural laws of economics.

Tonight, the broadcast will be devoted to the problem of Crooked Politics and to showing how we can have honest politics, regardless of the honesty of politicians. This is a discussion of natural law, not of morality.

These broadcasts are put out by a new school of thought, by the Scientific School of economics. This School does not hold out any hope that the day will ever come when all politicians, or even all public officials, will cease to be guided by their selfish personal interests; but it does promise that, by resort to the natural laws of economics, it can be brought about that it will be good politics for politicians in and out of office to act like honest men, whether or not they are honest.

That is really all the public has a right to demand; for the private life of the officials is their own private affair.

The scientist takes things as he finds them and, by resort to the laws of nature, brings about the conditions he wishes; and the man who carries this scientific method over into the field of economics begins on this problem by assuming that the politician is in politics as a business and that if he can get more votes and a better salary and hold his office more securely by going straight than by being crooked, he will go straight. The scientist holds that the more greedy and ambitious the politicians, the more careful will they be to respect the rights of the public, once conditions are so changed that there is nothing to be made by disregarding those rights.

The way to keep crooked politicians from selling the public out is to procede, not against the politicians, but to change the stresses by "taking the profit" out of the control of public policies; so that no one will care who controls them. Then, as no one will play politics selfishly, politicians will have to serve the public; because no private interests will tempt them.

The Scientific School of economics refuses to waste any time trying either to reform the politicians, or having them watched by the police, and refuses to waste time and money passing laws making crooked politics a crime. It is not necessary to denature steam or electricity to make use of them. We use them just as they are; and the more "kick" there is in them the more we can accomplish with them. So here; the Scientific School holds that, under the scientific system, the more selfish the politician is, the more certain he is to be an honest official.

Dangerous as we know electricity to be, we take it into the house; we even take it into the nursery and give it to the children to play with; we use fire the same way, and steam. We do not give violent acids to children to play with, but we do take them into the house and office and shop, and use them boldly and confidently. However, we do so by confining them

to channels in which we wish them to work, and limiting them to the tasks we wish them to perform. Electricity is safe for the children, when insulated—not otherwise; it must be impossible for the electric current to get outside the special field to which we wish to confine it.

But whether we are working with steam, or electricity, or with violent acids, this is possible only to those who understand the natural laws governing the situation and who obey those laws. We cannot safely trust untrained persons in these matters. We insist on knowing that those who handle drugs, who wire our homes, or who are entrusted with any of the details of such matters, that they first show that they understand the laws involved and how to take advantage of them.

INSULATE SELFISHNESS AS WE DO ELECTRICITY

The same rule holds in economics. To take advantage of the selfishness, greed, and ambition in men and to use these impulses to accomplish our purposes in civics, in politics, and in statecraft, we must understand the natural laws of economics. We must know how to insulate these forces.

Of course there are those who scoff at the claims of the Scientific School. Just as there were men who, because steel sinks, said that ships made of steel would sink; so there are those who hold that what they call the human element is too uncertain and that this uncertainty will defeat those who seek to solve these problems as here proposed. But men who knew the laws of physics, particularly the law of displaced volumes, knew that steel ships would float. In the same way, objectors said that Prof. Langley and the Wright Brothers were wasting their time. They said that it is impossible for a machine heavier than air to fly; but Langley and the Wright Brothers went on with their work. They had studied the laws involved, and they knew that the same laws of physics that makes it possible for a boy to fly a kite makes it possible for us to fly an airplane.

And so here; our economic problems are problems in natural law; and those who understand the natural laws of economics know that they can be solved by resort to these laws.

But, unfortunately, little as the public knows about the law of nature that keeps a steel ship afloat and enables us to fly an airplane, the public knows infinitely less about the natural laws of economics. The schools teach the laws of physics, but the schools do not teach the laws of economics; and, much worse, even, than that, the schools deny that these laws exist. Even those who pose as research men in the field of economics deny their existence. A recent broadcast of this series was devoted to the statement of President Harold Moulton of the Brookings Institute that there are no fixed and dependable natural laws in the economic field and that the best the economist can do is to be as observant as possible of the evolutionary processes and to avoid the extremes of dogmatism, in the hope that he may make a good guess as to the best policy for the public to adopt.

This is a dismal view, to say the least; and it is in sharp contrast with the confidence of the scientist, for the scientist never guesses. He knows—and knows that he knows.

This series of Voice of Freedom broadcasts is the first, and

so far, the only offering ever put out over the ether waves in support of the proposition that such laws exist and that, by resort to them we can solve social problems as by resort to other natural laws we solve shop problems. The only papers in the world devoted to this teaching are published by your speaker here in Stockton, which is now recognized on four continents as the world-center of this new school.

It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of the teaching of this new school; for it will completely revolutionize the thinking of mankind.

SELFISHNESS A CHEAP MOTIVE POWER

All that has been accomplished by the use of steam, electricity, gas, and gasoline would not, if put together, equal the benefits that would result from the acceptance of economics as a science and the use of man's selfish instincts as the motive power of organized society; nor does this involve a greater miracle than the use of a gas flame to cool a refrigerator box, or the pull of gravity to float a steel ship, or fly an airplane.

Nor is this such a complicated matter as it may seem at first; it is, indeed, a very simple matter—fully as simple as the steam engine and far more understandable than the electric dynamo.

We agree that all men are more or less selfish; and we agree that, in politics and statecraft the object of men's selfish desire is power, the power to control, the power that goes with authority; and it is agreed that this power, or authority, is desired by some men merely as a matter of personal pride, and by other men for what they can make out of it financially, and occasionally, for patriotic or altruistic reasons—for the good they can do. In the greater number of cases, the motives are mixed, and the men are moved to some extent by each of them.

But, while we cannot x-ray a man's motives and so cannot know exactly in any given case why men do what they do, there is one thing that we do know positively regarding this matter of power or authority in civics, politics, industry, and statecraft. This thing that we do know and on which we can rely in all cases is that power and authority is always a matter of location. By that it is meant that a politician who rises to power in Japan must look to Japan for the rewards of that success—his power is in Japan, not in the United States nor in Great Britain. And so it is with the political machine, the men who build up the machine and who operate it must look for their reward to the territory in which that machine operates, not outside that territory. The only way they can have any influence outside their own original territory is by forming an alliance with some other political machine in some other territory and so building up a larger machine with a larger field of operations. But it is still true that this enlarged machine must look for its returns to its own enlarged territory, not outside.

This is a fact that cannot be altered, and must be taken into account whenever one has to deal with a problem in civics, in politics, in industry, or in statecraft. Success in any of these fields is a matter of location, of limited jurisdiction; and what one gets out of his success in civics, politics, industry, or statecraft is determined first of all by the resources of the field in which he operates. It is these resources that determine the

value, for the house in unchanged. The increase in rent is all due to the police protection. The \$10 at the start and the \$85 paid later is pure rent. The \$5 is interest.

The twenty houses would net this vice operator more than \$15,000 per year, less only what it would cost him for collecting and for contributions to the Machine "kitty". If this man shifts the cost of rent collections to his tenants, as is so often done, and the people can be tricked into thinking prostitution a necessary evil that should be regulated by the police this man would be fairly safe from election dangers and nearly free of expense. What he would make would be rent, because he would be capitalizing location values.

Of course, as a rule, the landowners would take the rent, or the most of it themselves—dividing it only as they are obliged to "farm out" the rent collections. In any event this illustration of these twenty houses shows the part that rent plays in the Red Light district. Under the scientific system, it would be this rent that will be collected instead of taxes.

THIS RENT FUND A LIMITLESS CAMPAIGN FUND

Suppose that the reformers do start a campaign and the Machine has to defend itself again. As these moral up-heavals occur only once, let us say, in from three to five years, this exploiter would willingly contribute from \$2,500 to \$5,000 to the defense fund. And he would be only one of many who collect the rent which accrues from the activities of the under-world. Yet the reform leaders seem not to have realized that it is these high rentals in the vice district that supply the Vice Machine with the funds with which they smother the reform forces in elections. But the reformers have not yet discovered the secret of Machine finances and the weak point in the Machine's armor. They are still wasting their time by appeals to the moral law—and to the police.

Under the scientific system, it would be this rent that would be collected for public use. Instead of financing the rackets, it would finance the government. Taxes would be abolished.

No vice operator could make anything; they would get nothing for their trouble. Being practical men, they would lose all interest in vice rackets. The whole rotten system would collapse, not because it is against the law, but because these men would not do all that work and take all that risk for nothing.

It is not held that those who are engaged in the vice traffic will be personally any more virtuous under the plan proposed than they are now. What is claimed is that vice will be no longer commercially profitable; that, no matter what men and women are in private life it will be impossible for other people to capitalize their weakness and profit at their expense. Human nature would be unchanged; but because, under the scientific system, exploitation of all kinds would be impossible and prosperity would prevail, every normal man could support a wife and family and Mother Nature would solve this problem her own way.

Keep in touch with the Scientific School of Economics by reading **THE FORUM** (weekly, \$2.50 a year), or **NO TAXES** (bi-weekly, two years \$3.00). Two 4-p., 7-col. papers. Address **L. D. BECKWITH, Publisher, 1325 E. Poplar, Stockton, Calif.**