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**HELLEMENTS OF
HICKONOMICS**

IN

**HICCOUGHS OF VERSE
DONE IN OUR SOCIAL PLANNING MILL**

STEPHEN LEACOCK

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P R E F A C E

Lecturing the other day before a brilliant galaxy of young men and women, known, in the College where they belong, as Economics Three, there occurred to me, and I used, the metaphor of a social reformer sitting as a raven on the windowsill and croaking "Social Plan".

Economics Three woke up and laughed. This gave me the idea that it might be of great service if economic problems could be discussed in the form of the literature of imagination. This would help to remove the argument from the angers and the bitterness that so often surround it. If we cannot discuss it like gentlemen let us at least discuss it like idiots. Having got the idea, all I had to do was to write this book.

Of the economic basis of this book I would like to say this. Forty years of hard work on economics has pretty well removed all the ideas I ever had about it. I think the whole science is a wreck and has got to be built up again. For our social problems there is about

as much light to be found in the older economics as from a glow-worm. Only one or two things seem to me clear. Cast-iron communism is nothing but a penitentiary. Sooner or later either it is doomed or man is doomed. I believe that the only possible basis for organised society is that of every man for himself, - for himself and those near and dear to him. But on this basis there must be put in operation a much more efficient and much more just social mechanism. We need not a new game but a new set of rules. There must be bread and work for all; and that ought to mean mighty little work and lots of bread.

I would like to say a word or two about some of the theories with which these verses deal. The theory of Malthus was triumphant

for a hundred years. It was regarded as a melancholy truth, but *as none*

The less *The great American economist* true. Francis Walker spoke of argument directed at it as being only

the "headless arrows of beginners". But from the first I shot my

headless arrows at it, unheeded. All that is true about the Malthus

stuff is that if people multiply fast enough and long enough presently

there wont be standing room. But it is no explanation of the industrial

poverty, the starvation and the slum of the nineteenth and
 twentieth centuries. The great collapse of the last five years
 has proved this to everybody. Poverty, unemployment and disaster
 have overwhelmed alike the city and the solitude: the world is starving
 in the midst of plenty: numbers have nothing to do with it. There is
 no population problem for humanity at large: only for the single family
 that cannot place its offspring: and that ^{problem} belongs not under "numbers-
 and-subsistence", but under social organisation.

In regard to Malthus himself, I have
~~not~~ permitted myself, in the interests of
 art, to clothe ^{him} with an imaginary character
 and appearance to suit his doctrine. It
 is true that Malthus, who ^{was an ordained clergyman but} lectured for
 the East India Company, at their college
 at Haileybury, had a bare lip and
 was more or less ^{unintelligible} inaudible to his
 hearers. This, however, is hardly a

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channel to another. Looked at that way I don't think he's any

crookeder than the rest of us. I've known several bankers. They

seemed all right.

I am not saying that there is nothing wrong with the present conditions under which banks work, and with the present privileges which they enjoy. They need further social regulation and control, just as all other branches of industrial and financial activity need it. That is part of the new world in which we ~~to~~ live. Forms of legislative control and grants of legislative privilege that worked well enough in the simpler environment of three generations ago do not work so well now. But the

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banker only shares this environment with the rest of them^{us}. There is no more reason to "abolish" the banker than there is to abolish the butcher and the baker: as much, as little. If we abolish them, then their place is taken by the officials of a communistic state, — appointed, in the pure world of theory, by the honest and enlightened vote of their free fellow-citizens but appointed in reality on a basis of favoritism, intrigue, and fear and tyranny of which one shudders to think.

If one wishes to appreciate a banker

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better, one has only to think of a state bank, run by and for the people, handing out free loans like free lunch. This is the picture which I have tried to portray in the person of Comrade Glych the Commissar. I try to mean by him all that is good and bad in Bolshevism, its fierce elemental energy, its rootage in by-gone tyranny, and its inevitable end.

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I linger with interest on what is to me the pathetic but attractive figure of Happy Jim the Consumer. I see him, dancing in his rags, a poor Scarecrow in the wind, but carrying down with him in history all the lost glory of Manchester School. Who pays any attention to Jimmy now? We call a commission on a tariff, ^{and} listen to what is called "evidence" from manufacturers: we hear from bankers on banking, and from burglars on burglary. Who listens to poor Happy Jim? If he came to the door in his rags, with his tambourine and his John Stuart Mill would they let him in? Suppose they did and Jimmy the Consumer read out a piece of John Stuart Mill how they would laugh?

I do not mean by this to deny the need and the expediency of tariff protection. We are not yet ready for the Kingdom of Heaven of Universal Free Trade. In our present world it would tend to force down the wages of all nations to the wages of the lowest. Not until the sunken areas are leveled up can we have

a uniform world. But it seems to me that in the post-war period we have gone tariff-minded. The "nationalism" of the unhappy Versailles Treaty has acted as a virus ~~in~~ in the veins of humanity. It has put us back, centuries back, into the poisonous attitude of regarding other nations ruin as our own welfare, and other nations welfare as our ruin. We are back again to the insular insanity of Ruler Britannia, exulting in the fact that other nations "shall one day go to tyrants fall." We have forgotten David Hume's noble sentiment in which even as a citizen of Great Britain he "prayed for the welfare

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of France" It may therefore do
no harm to recall the "welfare economics" of
the consumer and to tolerate for a moment

the salvation songs of my Happy Jim.

No manufacturers need fear that the

Carroll is going to vanish overnight.

The wind-swept picture of the Western farmer is one I have

loved to present. It is meant to express, and I hope it does, something

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of the age-long fascination of the land, and the magic of its ownership. I for one cannot bear to think that the old independent farming is to go: that the breezy call of incense breathing morn is to be replaced by the time clock of a regimented, socialized, supermechanized land-factory. We must keep the farmers. If they cannot regulate the "how-much" of their production, let them, as they used to, raise all they damn can, and then fire it round anywhere, - pelt one another with new-mown hay and sugar beets. But dont lets lose them.

And with that, I put this book as the politicians say, "in the hands of my friends". At least they will find no ill-nature in it.

↑ 3869 Cote des Neiges Road
 Montreal
 April Fool's Day
 1936

Stephen Leacock.

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She stands upon the Garden Path where she was wont to tread

Eternal flowers, that know not death, still nod beside her head.

In rustled Silk and Lavender, a hundred years alone,

Is it in Truth a Maiden's Form, or withered Frame of Bone?

Seek not the hooded Face to scan where hides the drooping Head

Perchance the Curls lie damp upon the Features of the Dead.

Perchance in place of glowing Life, now dessicated, null,

Earth's final Parody of Love, the Simpering of a Skull.

Or Maid, or Ghost, or Pictured Fate

Let her be what she may,

We bring her forth to join her mate

This Golden Wedding Day

Moving before us

Singing in Chorus

Golden + Glorious

Time honoured Lay

of wearing a Bonnet

with a blue ribbon in it

On a Golden Wedding Day

MS to Book

Type 3.

Hickonomics

→
in
Hiccoughs of Verse

—
Made in Our Social Panning Mill

~~~~~  
Stephen Leacock

—  
New York etc

~~MCMXXVI~~

## Preface

Securing the other day before a brilliant  
galaxy of young men & women, known  
, in the college where they belong, as  
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<sup>efficient and much more just social mechanism</sup>  
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 and disaster have overwhelmed alike the  
 city and the solitude: ~~poverty~~ the  
 world is starving in the midst of plenty  
 : ~~poverty is life where people numbers have~~  
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 population problem for humanity at large:  
 only for the single family that cannot  
 place its offspring: and that belongs  
 not under "numbers-and-subsistence", but  
 under social organization.

If in regard to banking I am  
 aware that certain wicked persons

Have lately widely said that a bank is bunk; that a banker usurps what ought to be a social privilege in that he sits down and "makes money" with a pen and ink. This is not so. A great many of the forms that a banker uses have to be printed. And anyway, even if it is true that he can make money for other people by sitting down and writing "loan" with his left hand and "deposit" with his right, he can't do that for himself.

All he can get out of it is the interest that other people pay him for the "loan-and-deposit" stuff. In return he performs the social service of helping to shift the world production

from one channel to another. Looked at that way I don't think his any crookeder than the rest of us & I've known several bankers. They seemed all right.

If you want to appreciate a banker better, just think of a state bank run by and for the people, handing out free loans like free lunch.

If I linger with <sup>interest</sup> pleasure on what is to me the pathetic but attractive figure of Stabby Jim the consumer. I see him dancing in his rags, a poor Scarecrow in the wind, but carrying down with him in his hands all the lost glory of Manchester School. Who

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 call a commission on a tariff ~~the~~  
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 the door in his rags, with his  
 Tombrone and his John Stuart Mill  
 would they let him in? If they suppose  
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 out of piece of John Stuart Mill how  
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The Old Brewery Bay  
 Lake Couchiching  
 Orillia - Ontario

Stephen Leacock

Doctor of Literature: University of Toronto

And also: Ph.D (Chicago) : Litt.D (Brown and Dartmouth)  
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Sometimes Chairman of the Chequamegon and Commission: and  
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