



This stuff called money

Wilbur, the winner of the intercollegiate craps-shooting meet, would hardly believe that the paper money bulging his pockets isn't Wealth. If he were told that the economists insist that nothing can be Wealth that isn't a material thing worked on by Labor in such a way that it satisfies a human desire, he might still be unconvinced.

"These dollar bills are material because I can see them and feel them. Labor in the U. S. Mint engraved 'em and printed 'em. And if you don't think these pockets full of mullah satisfy my desires, you're plain nuts."

If his reasoning were as reliable as his craps-shooting skill, the country having the greatest number of printing machines would be the Wealthiest. And any country wasting its Labor printing anything smaller than billion-dollar bills would be considered a nation of idiots. And yet our friend's money does seem to be Wealth according to the definition.

It is true that the paper, of which money is made, is material. But the same amount of paper, ink, and Labor goes into making a one-dollar bill and a thousand-dollar bill. What makes one a thousand times as valuable as the other is faith; faith in the government that prints the bills and faith that one bill will buy a thousand times more food, shelter, and clothing than the other. So we see that money is not a material thing called paper, but an immaterial thing called faith. When a nation's citizens lose faith in their government--as in most of Europe today--its money has little or no value. It is just paper.

Nor does money satisfy a human desire. Wilbur can't eat it or wear it; neither can it give him shelter nor entertainment. Money can only satisfy society's desires for a medium of exchange and a convenient measure of value. It provides society with an easy way to exchange part of a horse for a bag of doughnuts without taking the horse apart. But satisfying society's desires is not the same as satisfying human desires because society is not human. No more so than a house is a brick because it is made up of bricks.

If, according to the economists' own definition, money is not Wealth, it should follow that money has no important part--if any--in "the science that investigates the nature of Wealth, its production and distribution." And yet we rarely read an "Economic" report in our papers, or hear one over the radio, that does very much more than report business conditions in terms of money.

Most strange of all, the communists, socialists and members of the National Association of Manufacturers, who have dedicated themselves to hurling "economic" theories at each other while they, and the world in general, totter on the brink of collapse, are none of them talking in terms of economics. They all believe they are; but in reality the programs of NAM, the Commies, and the Socialists are purely political--and not economic--in nature.

All of which may explain why Wilbur thinks the stuff in his pockets is Wealth; and why the economic condition of the world grows steadily worse as the number of "economists" increases.

12828

NEXT WEEK: Poleko