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# *The Civics & Equity League*

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A Code of  
Economic Ethics  
by  
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## A Code Of Economic Ethics

Political Economy, which is the most important subject for thoughtful attention, under this government "by the people", is contemplated as a science, but science has to do with axiomatic material and facts and logical deduction, all three of which have always been, and still are, studiously avoided in economic discussion. Science is classified knowledge and the palaver which the professors and writers, who get a living from the pretense of superior knowledge of social affairs, call political economy, has no relation to anything scientific.

The political housekeeping of civilization is so complicated, so intricate, that it is as preposterous to undertake any work for social betterment without a knowledge and a comprehension of the facts, conditions and also the principles involved, as it would be for a child to undertake astronomical calculations.

Nerveless, our cities swarm with political advisors, reformers, social workers, professors, writers and charity dispensers, who make no distinction between fact and fancy, who ignore logical deduction and revel in sentiment.

"The year's at the Spring,  
And the day's at the morn;  
Morning's at seven;  
The hill-side's dew pearled;  
The lark's on the wing,  
The snail's on the thorn;  
God's in his heaven --  
All's right with the world."

In such lyrics, many, oppressed by obvious conditions, find a justification and solace, but in facts, there lurks an obligation -- a civic duty. All is not right with the world. A seven percent of our little children go to school hungry,

and thrice as many more without sufficient. In our slums the infant death rate is 27 as against 7 in a reasonably good place to live. Ten percent of those who die are disposed of as paupers and a sixty per cent leave relatives incumbered with an installment funeral. There is small chance that one will be able to pay his own way at sixty, if he lives to be sixty. Indifference to the woes of others embrates us/ and all is not right with the world. \

I am urging you again never to assume that I am right, and to use the same good sense contemplating the celebrities, who, having premitted us to get into this slough of despondency now propose to show us the way out. As several philosophers have assured us, we cannot come to social reform thru the forces that have made social reform necessary.

Our endeavor is to stimulate enthusiasm in a search for the truth, and a courage to follow it wherever it may lead, because this government can never reach its goal if its people persist in being gullible and spineless and it is high time that "we the people" were dictatorial and not subservient to ~~the~~ public servants, who have naught but presentability to recommend them.

Because our economic discussion starts without a premise it never arrives at a definite or logical conclusion, but persists endlessly. That is the reason political economy has been dubbed "the dismal science", altho it is an interesting, humanitarian and all important subject.

At any rate ~~we~~ cannot arrive at a right conclusion except from a right beginning. The Declaration of Independence and the preamble to the Constitution ought to serve such purpose

but any attempt to use them always results in argumentation and usually the suggestion that they represent "exploded ideas of the eighteenth century". So we offer a Code of Economic Ethics, a set of tenets, a political creed --for which we ask your indorsement, thus committing you to respectable radicalism.

## I

All men have equal right to the use and enjoyment  
of the elements provided by Nature ---that is, God

## II

Every man is entitled to benefits from society  
equivalent to the services he renders

## III

The principles -- the accepted standards of right and wrong; obvious in the simpler relations of men are not abrogated or reversed by the more intricate relations that result from our social growth

## IV

Government is under the same moral obligation to be honest that applies to the individual.

## V

Legislation ignoring such right, equity, principle or obligation is wrong and should be revised.

The first two are items of belief. The others, perhaps, matters of opinion, because their application may involve expediency which, with many people, seems to justify the choice of a lesser of two evils -- like white lies, or deceiving little folks, for their own good. These five tenets seem to be the fundamental need of all civic and economic discussion.

With reference to the first two. One believes them or he does not. If not, it is a long, long story to indicate "who not" and "why not", who is to decide and why, and whoever attempts it is sure to renig in some other suit because everyone is committed by profession or association to some creed, some belief or some code with which the tenets are consistent.

The first; "All men have equal right to the use and enjoyment of

The first; "All men have equal right to the use and enjoyment of the elements provided by Nature" is very harmonious with the "all men are created free and equal" of the Declaration, unless one contemplates it as a biological rather than a political document, as many seem to. The tenet reads almost word for word with one in the Rotarian Code of Ethics, but it is the last one, and few Rotarians have read them all. It suggests such practical application of the "Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man" profession of ~~the~~ church belief that no clergyman can assail it, altho the clergy will not subscribe to our radical undertaking.

At any rate, the group with which I am identified believes that All men have equal right to the use and enjoyment of the elements provided by Nature. Likewise, that every man is entitled to benefits from society equivalent to the services he renders, because, otherwise, he would be better off outside of civilization where he would get all he earned, altho he would find it necessary to earn all he would get.

In 1849 Abraham Lincoln said; Inasmuch as most good things are produced by labor, it follows that all such things, of right, belong to those whose labor has produced them. But it has so happened, in all ages of the world, that some have labored and others, without labor, enjoyed a large proportion of the fruits. This is wrong and should not continue. To secure for each laborer the whole product of his labor, or as nearly as may be, is a worthy subject for any good government.

Since 1849 economic injustice in this country has developed from bad to worse, from worse to intolerable, and it is now pos-

sible for one man to take and claim as his own, wealth almost beyond comprehension, while millions of deserving men, availing of every opportunity for unremitting toil, live without sufficient and die in poverty. This is a plain statement of fact to which many in comfortable circumstances take exception because they feel that "fitness" rather than "luck" designates their place. With scant charity and plentiful conceit they attribute the failure of those less fortunate to their faults and follies, the success of the more affluent, to some opportunity that was denied them. Nor do they comprehend that the step others must take to stand beside them is a thousand times more difficult than the step they themselves are unable to take and stand beside those in the foreground. Their criticism reminds one of the schoolmaster who said to the boy; "you ought to be ashamed of yourself. When George Washington was your age he was a competent surveyor", to which the boy replied, "Yes sir, and when he was your age he was the President of the United States"

Almost within the memory of some of us, the power of human hands to satisfy human wants has been advanced and multiplied until one might reasonably expect to find every human being within the bounds of civilization living in comfort, but, with the masses the struggle for existence is appalling. "Masses indeed, every unit of whom has his own heart and sorrows. Every unit of these masses is a miraculous man, even as thou thyself art, struggling with vision or in blindness for his infinite kingdom -- this life, which he has got only once in the middle of eternities -- with a spark of the Divinity, what thou callest an immortal soul, in him." Carlyle thus identi-

fied an individual in the mass compelled by civilization to drudge for those who monopolize "the elements provided by Nature"

In every field of activity, the workingman of today produces and delivers to society, twenty, fifty, one hundred times as much wealth as the workingman of a century ago, but receives no more -- only the necessities of a bare existence. The seamstress with a sewing machine can produce fifty times as many garments as when

With fingers weary and worn,  
 With eyelids heavy and red,  
 A woman sat, in unwomanly rags,  
 Plying her needle and thread;  
 Stitch !    Stitch !    Stitch !  
 In poverty, hunger and dirt;  
 And still, with a voice of dolorous pitch,  
 Would that its tone could reach the rich --  
 She sang this song of the shirt.

Work !    Work !    Work !  
 Till the brain begins to swim.  
 Work !    Work !    Work !  
 Till the eyes grow heavy and dim.  
 Seam and gusset and band,  
 Band and gusset and seam,  
 Till over the buttons I fall asleep  
 And sew them on in my dream.

The seamstress of today, producing fifty times as much wealth but receiving no more, presents as deplorable a picture as

that which Hood portrayed, for her song too, is

Work : Work & Work's

My labor never flag;

And what are its wages ? A bed of straw,

A crust of bread, and rags.

A-shattered roof and this naked floor,

A table, a broken chair,

And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank

For sometimes falling there.

Thomas Hood died in eighteen hundred and forty-five and over his grave stands a monument erected by eager contributions from princes, gentlemen, scholars, millionaires, artisans, laborers, seamstresses and shop-girls. On it is inscribed, "He sang the song of the shirt." No poem ever written was so instantly learned by heart by a whole people. Street singers chanted its bitter truth in the darkest slums of East London. It gave to the commonplace the dignity of a tragedy, supplying, for the moment, that one touch of nature which makes the whole world akin -- and women of royal station shed ineffectual tears over it. Ineffectual, because altho many would have then made personal sacrifice to right the wrong civilization thrusts upon its workers, the remedy was not suggested.

The remedy is known. The causes which produce want in the midst of plenty, ignorance in the midst of intelligence, an aristocracy in America, have been traced to their inception. Poverty can be abolished. Not in a day, but in a decade. Not with charity but by justice. Not with legislative legerdemain but by laws which shall harmonize with accepted



standards of right and wrong -- laws consistent with our  
Code of Economic Ethics