

EDITORIAL

## WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH A COLLEGE PROFESSOR?

By DANIEL DE LEON

**D**R. IRVING FISHER, the Yale physiological investigator, has come out with a scheme for the life insurance companies to enhance their profits by a system of hygiene which will make the policy holders live—and pay premiums—fifteen years longer.

“Then, too,” said Professor Fisher on the 5th to the National Association of Life Insurance Presidents, “there would be the vast economic gain to the country in general by reason of the prolongation of life.”

This “economic gain” is a strange god the patent economists of the country have been running after with great persistency of late. Professor Fisher has joined the pursuit race, only to trip in his haste.

To say “son,” implies a “father.” To say “there would be vast economic gain to the country by prolongation of life,” implies that at present the life we have is “being fully utilized.” That implication of Professor Fisher’s argument is false as dicers’ oaths.

The economic, productive life we have, is not to-day being fully utilized. It is, on the contrary, being recklessly, riotously, criminally squandered by the very system the Dr. Fishers uphold. Add fifteen years to the workers’ lives?—Why, every day workers are taking poisons and gas to shorten their lives; they feel themselves superfluous on the stage under the present managership. Unemployment is now recognized, even by capitalist apologists—witness Mr. Jules A. Guedon—as a chronic and necessary accompaniment of the present industrial system. Ten million workers are at this writing estimated to be out of work in the country. Is their economic life being utilized?

Along with increased wages in some trades, has gone the offsetting fact that

periods of employment in those lines are shorter and farther between. Thousands of clerks, salesmen, lawyers, flunkies of one sort and another, are to-day wholly withdrawn from production, and act only as the mercenaries of one employer against another, or as domestic trimmings. Is the economic life of all these people being utilized?

Machines which would simplify and cheapen production ten-fold are destroyed, or bought up and kept hidden by monopolists, inventive genius is discouraged and hampered, in order to allow the owners of the present less perfect machinery to reap the “return on their investment.” Is the economic power of the thousands who could be employed on these machines being utilized?

Goods are wantonly destroyed after production, and out-put is limited, curbed, and curtailed, in order to “steady prices.” Is that utilizing the economic power of the country?

Look wherever we will, there we find the evidences of the insane degeneration which a system of production for profit only is inevitably bound to run into. No doubt about it, human labor power is to-day being ruthlessly and alarmingly wasted. What we have is not made use of—why cry for more! The only effect it could have would be to increase the army of unemployed and thereby cut down wages.

By shutting his eyes to these facts, Professor Fisher has done himself no credit. A year or so ago, apropos of a dietetic controversy, which is more in his line, Professor Fisher wittily asked: “If we are to chew our starch, and bolt our meat, what shall we do with a ham sandwich?” In the light of his latest utterance, one feels tempted to enquire: “If we are to pity the blind, and nail the falsifier, what shall we do with a capitalist college professor?”

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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[slpns@slp.org](mailto:slpns@slp.org)