

sire. But, her teaching is not freely given; we must apply ourselves diligently to a study of her ways to find out what they are. The prerequisite for a successful investigation is to admit that nature has the secret we are trying to uncover; if we begin by saying that in this or that field nature has no laws, that humans make their own way without reference to nature, we shall end up knowing nothing.

If, for instance, we discard the Ten Commandments, declaring them to be mere man-made conventions changeable at will, we end in chaos and disorder — evidence that we are on the wrong track. Likewise, if we declare that God in his infinite wisdom chose to disregard economics, that in ordering the world he overlooked the ways and means for man's making a living, that in this particular field man has to work out his own formulae, we will end up with a poor living.

"Economics" without Principles

And that is exactly what has happened in the study of economics; many experts in this field are of the opinion that nature can tell us nothing about the business of making a living; it's all a matter of human manipulation. That is why economics is so often a meaningless hodgepodge of ex-

pediencies, leading us to no understanding and no good end. I might add that the incongruities of ethical life, such as divorce, juvenile delinquency, international friction, and so on, are largely the result of the current conceit that there is no warrant for ethics in nature, no positive laws for moral behavior; but that is another subject.

I shall try to present some evidence that nature has her own rules and regulations in the field of economics, indicating that we had better apply ourselves to learning about them if we would avoid the obviously unsatisfactory results from relying on man's ingenuity. Come with me into the laboratory of experience, which is the source of much understanding.

The First Pioneer

Let us cast our mind's eye back to the time when there was no Madison, Wisconsin, or any other city west of the Alleghenies, when only the seed of a later social integration was planted here — when a lone frontiersman decided to settle on this spot of earth. The primary consideration which influenced his decision was the possibility of making a living here. He selected what later became Madison because the land was fertile, water was plentiful, the forests abounded with wood for

his comfort, meat for his sustenance, and hides for his raiment. This was the workshop from which he could expect good wages for his efforts. Without benefit of economic textbooks, he hit upon a couple of economic laws: (1) that production, or wealth, consists of useful things resulting from the application of human labor to natural resources; (2) that wages come from production.

These laws, these precepts of nature, are still in force and always will be despite the efforts of some "experts" to rescind them. Often the yearning for manna from heaven obscures the fact that only by the application of labor to raw materials can economic goods appear, but the yearning is so strong that men ask government to play God and reproduce the miracle of the wilderness.

Government, of course, can produce nothing, let alone a miracle; and when it presumes to drop manna on its chosen people, it simply takes what some produce and hands it over to others; its largess is never a free gift. And as for wages, they still come from production, even though there are sectarians who maintain that wages come from the safety vaults of a soulless boss. The consequences of disregarding these two dictates of nature are too well known to call for discussion.

Returning to our first pioneer, his initial wages are meager. That is because he is compelled by the condition of his existence to be a jack-of-all-trades, proficient in none. He produces little and therefore has little. But he is not satisfied with his lot for, unlike the beasts in the forest or the fish in the sea, man is not content merely to exist.

And here we hit upon a natural law which plays a prime role in man's economic life: He is the insatiable animal, always dreaming of ways and means for improving his circumstances and widening his horizon. The cabin built by the pioneer to protect himself from the elements was castle enough in the beginning; but soon he begins to think of a floor covering, of pictures on the wall, of a lean-to, of a clavichord to brighten his evenings at home and, at long last, of hot-and-cold running water to relieve him of the laborious pumping. Were it not for man's insatiability, there would be no such study as economics.

A Neighbor Arrives

But the things the pioneer dreams about are unattainable as long as he is compelled to go it alone. Along comes a second pioneer, and his choice of a place to work is based on the same con-