

U. Sinclair. Public Goods

Grad 586

report
must be
made by
the
1st of
the
month

with
the
report

7/28/81

Need GREs
& 3 ltrs. of rec.

Concerning "Public Goods"

"Consider the rich, how they become so. ... they ... have taken from others, and that which they have taken, the others have lost. The very essence of their richness is that there are many poor. ... richness means possessing material things and excluding others from possession thereof. Of such is the kingdom of Mammon.

In the region of the mind the situation is exactly the opposite; the wealth of one is the wealth of all, and the highest joy of possession is that the thing possessed may be shared by all and be of benefit to all, with no diminution to anyone. ... my pleasure is in communicating to you what I believe to be truth, and exactly proportionate to my success in spreading this truth is my own gratification. This applies to Shakespeare ..., Beethoven, ... Newton ...; each gives something which all mankind may enjoy forever, and no one's pleasure in "As You Like It" or in the "Fifth Symphony" or in an understanding of the movements of the planets is any less because at the same time millions of other people are having that same pleasure.

... the attitude to life of the true scientist, the scholar and the lover of the arts ... is as different from the attitude of the ... speculator and the exploiter as ... night from day.

But now comes a new species of superman, whose function it is to make peace between these two forces. ... The name of this great American enchanter is PREXY! ... He does it by making his entire being a conglomeration of hypocrisies and stultifications. ... In a year or two he has told so many different kinds of falsehoods and made so many different kinds of pretenses to so many different people, that he has lost all understanding of what truth is, or how a man could speak it.

These millions he has just collected from the aged oil dinosaur ... he is now going to spend in a free and absolutely disinterested pursuit of understanding, with utter loyalty to scientific facts wherever they may lead, ... and the God of Truth and Justice and Love.

... he will go back to his deans and explain what the political machine demands -- the expulsion of this or that professor, the support of the university for this candidate or that bit of graft; and the president and his cabinet will work out the proper set of lies to tell the discharged professor, or to the plundered public, or both.

He and his cabinet now start a campaign of intrigue against the recalcitrant professor; they set going rumors calculated to damage his prestige; they contrive traps into which to snare him. ... Or perhaps they decide to combine the departments of literature and obstetrics. Always they tell the professor -- with their right hands upon the Bible they swear it to the public and

to the newspapers -- that it is purely an "administrative matter", there is no question of academic freedom involved, and everyone in their institution lives, moves and has his being in the single-minded love of truth.

He receives the salary of a plutocrat, and ... the prestige and precedence that go with it. He lives on terms of equality with business emperors and financial dukes, and conveys their will to mankind, and perpetuates their ideals and prejudices in the coming generation.

You will find all these presidents of little toad stools duly recorded in "Who's Who". You may look in that volume for the best minds in our country, the men who are serving as pioneers of social justice and democracy, and three times out of four you will not find their names. But all presidents of colleges, ... take rank with senators ... ex officio."

--- Upton Sinclair, THE GOOSE STEP, A Study of American Education, 1922, Chapter LXXVI, "Prexy".

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