

A statement by Scott Nearing

TEACHING IS MY JOB

TEACHING is my job. I have been sure of that ever since I gave my first sociology courses at Temple University, Philadelphia, back in 1903.

Teaching has three essential aspects: (1) to arouse interest, (2) to impart knowledge, (3) to stimulate creative effort. In all of these directions my teaching was successful. My students were interested, they learned, thought and acted.

Right there trouble began. The businessmen who control American schools and colleges want trained juveniles, not educated adults. So I was eased out of Swarthmore College in 1913 and was dropped by the University of Pennsylvania in 1915 and by the municipal University of Toledo in 1917.

Meanwhile I had built up a considerable following as a public lecturer. But the same business interests that closed college classrooms to me were equally effective in barring me from the lecture platform.

For a time I wrote for some of the popular magazines. Again the privileged groups were dominant and by the mid-twenties I was out of that field also.

Book publishers likewise closed their doors to me. The Macmillan Company had published six of my manuscripts between 1908 and 1916.

As a result of my attitude toward World War I, they "remaindered" the books and refused all subsequently offered manuscripts. Other publishers did likewise in the 1920's. "Must We Starve?" was the last of my book manuscripts to be published (1932). From 1934 to 1943 I offered to one publisher after another a manuscript on "The World Crisis" and another on "World Organization." Everywhere the answer was the same: "There is no market for such books."

What was the difficulty? The manuscripts were neither inaccurate nor poorly written. The facts they contained and the viewpoint they presented were not acceptable to the business interests, although they were indispensable to an understanding of the world we live in, and of vital importance in formulating a program for bringing it under popular control.

It is the duty of a social scientist to concentrate on the issues that seem to him of the greatest moment. Until 1913 I wrote and spoke on child labor, wages and standards of living. During World War I, I analyzed the causes of war and tried to point the way to lasting peace. Later I attempted to evaluate the revolutionary turmoil that rocked the western world after 1917. In the 1930's I wrote forthrightly about the Great Depression. This plain speaking cost me my jobs, my audiences and my reading public.

But the price was not too high. A scientist who takes his social responsibilities seriously must investigate, draw conclusions, check and announce his findings. His first loyalty is to

truth; his second is to social progress; his third is to contemporary well-being.

I have constantly said and written what I believed to be true, selecting for emphasis those truths which seemed to promise most for progress and for creative living.

I have always refused to say or write things simply because people wanted to hear or read them.

I have always refused to say or write what the present rulers of the U. S. A. want people to hear or read.

Fidelity to truth, however, butters no parsnips. If the business interests could freeze me out of my profession and starve me besides, the game would be up.

After careful consideration, I went into a remote section of the Green Mountains, bought some rough land, dug a garden, built a house and set out to make the place self-supporting. Ten years of hard work have brought the farm to a point where it yields a meagre living.

At sixty I am as enthusiastic a teacher as I was at twenty. My experience is wider and my judgment is sounder than they were forty years ago. At sixty, as at twenty, I shall take every opportunity to explain the significant social issues that confront us.

The farm feeds, houses and clothes me and gives me a certain margin of free time. In that free time I am in a position to continue my teaching. While my energy lasts, and as opportunity offers, I expect to talk to individuals and groups.

With the cooperation of some friends in Washington, I plan to write and circulate a newsletter interpreting current events.*

Each year I plan also to publish a book or a substantial pamphlet covering some important subject in the field of science. These publications will be known as Social Science Handbooks.

The Handbooks, like the newsletter, will not be copyrighted. Anyone will be free and welcome to reproduce their contents in part or in whole, with no obligation even to credit the source.

The Handbooks, like the newsletter, will be sold at cost. For writing them I will accept no pay and, so far as I can control the matter, no one will make profit out of their distribution.

At the present critical juncture in the progress of mankind it is important to arouse interest, diffuse information and secure creative thought and action on certain matters of grave concern to this and succeeding generations. I am offering the newsletter and the Handbooks as a contribution toward those ends. Anything that you may do to help spread the ideas there presented will be appreciated.

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Scott Nearing.

* "World Events" published quarterly. \$1.00 a year. Address: World Events Committee, East Palatka, Fla.