

THE PRESENT STATE OF TEACHING AND RESEARCH IN ECONOMIC  
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN FRANCE  
PROPOSALS FOR ITS IMPROVEMENT

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Memorandum ~~Notice~~<sup>Report</sup> by M. RIST

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prepared for the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial

I

In using the expression the "Social Sciences", we intend, in the following <sup>report</sup> ~~notice~~, to leave aside the consideration of History, Psychology, Human Geography, the History of Religion and even Anthropology. These sciences have long since had the benefit, in France, of organised teaching systems, with the headquarters at the "Faculté des Lettres", at the "Ecole des Hautes Etudes" and the "Collège de France"<sup>(1)</sup>. They are already provided with laboratories and libraries, scientific meetings and regular publications - often helped by special grants - insure their continual usefulness.

In speaking here of the "Social Sciences", we have in mind, particularly, the Economic and Political Sciences, including Comparative Jurisprudence and Sociology in the strict sense of the term. It is only in relatively recent times that these sciences have acquired a position in the French educational

(1) In Paris, there is even a School of Anthropology, where the instruction is directed chiefly by the Society of Anthropology, and, a few months ago, an Institute of Ethnology was created which is partly supported by the French Colonies.

world. Political Economy was only included in the University Curriculums in 1876, when the first Chair in Economics was created at the "Faculté de Droit" (Law Faculty) and occupied by Paul <sup>Cauwès</sup> ~~Caumont~~.

In 1885, when a special Chair was inaugurated for DURKHEIM, the study of Sociology entered the University. These two subjects were looked upon for a long time with distrust both by the Government (the teaching of Political Science did not exist during the Second Empire) and by certain sections of public opinion. Even to-day, the teaching of Economics in the <sup>"</sup>Facultés de Droit meets with a certain amount of hostility from the warmest adherents of the school of economic liberalism. Even the word "Sociology" -owing to the fact that it was used by Auguste Comte and by the School of Positivists - is sometimes criticised by the partisans of economic liberalism, although the Sociologists have long since renounced the championships of any particular school of philosophy. This more or less unconscious hostility, as well as openly expressed criticism, long hindered the inclusion of the Social and Economic Sciences in the University curriculums. This explains -together with other circumstances which we shall mention later - the notorious inadequacy of the teaching of Economics and Sociology in France. The object of this article is to call attention to this very inadequacy.

It will be useful, in what follows, to distinguish between the work of teaching and that of Scientific Research. While there now exists in France an organised system of instruction in the economic, political and social sciences, in the

domain of scientific research work, on the other hand, there is not only a complete lack of organisation (which is of only secondary importance), but also (and this seems to us far more deplorable) almost complete lack of material resources.

- II -

THE ORGANISATION OF THE TEACHING OF ECONOMICS AND SOCIOLOGY  
IN FRANCE

The teaching of economic and political sciences in France is concentrated, as is well known, in the various Facultés de Droit (Law Schools). It is in these Faculties that future Statesmen, Functionaries and many business men are trained. Thus it has been thought advisable - not however without much opposition on the part of the jurists - to include in these Law Schools the teaching of the economic and political sciences, which teaching was only organised, in reality, in 1895.

In 1895, M. POINCARÉ, who was then Minister of Public Instruction, created the doctorate of Political and Economic Science, which includes mainly Political Economy, Finance, the History of Economic Theory, Constitutional Law, International Law and Administrative Law. It is only this year (1925) that the study of Statistics and Social Economics has been included.

At the Facultés de Droit, in the provinces, as well as in Paris, are to be found the vast majority of young men



and women who are pursuing the study of the economic and political sciences.

These Faculties, however, are not the only centers of instruction in this field. The most striking feature, indeed, of the instruction given in these subjects, is the number of different centers.

Let us first mention the Ecole des Sciences Politiques (School of Political Science), a private institution, founded soon after the disasters of 1870-1871 by a group of men whose object was to create an independent center for the study of Political Science where could be trained the future diplomats, functionaries and politicians who would be needed for the newly-born Republic. At this time, there was no State institution of this kind; the Facultés de Droit were exclusively concerned with the training of magistrates and lawyers. The School of Political Science has rendered great service. Since the creation in 1895 of the system of instruction in the economic and political sciences in the Facultés de Droit, which we have described above, it might be thought that the School of Political Science duplicated the work of the Facultés. However, the School has been careful to differentiate its functions by the selection of its teachers, and this naturally changes the character of the instruction given there. The courses are given chiefly by men occupying a place in the administration of the affairs of the State (that is to say practical politicians). These prepare the students for the important competitive examinations which lead in France to

administrative positions (examination for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for the inspection of Public Finance, etc...). In Paris, most of the young men <sup>who</sup> hope to pass these examinations take the courses both at the Faculté de Droit and at the ~~Séminaire~~ Ecole des Sciences Politiques.

The Facultés de Droit and the Ecole des Sciences Politiques (the latter in Paris and not in the Provinces) are the only institutions where the political and economic sciences are taught in their ensemble.

However, the political and social sciences are taught, together with other subjects - such as History and technical instruction - at the Ecole des Hautes-Etudes, at the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers, at the Ecole Polytechnique, and at the Ecole des Ponts et Chaussées. These last two institutions are schools for engineers. M. COLSON has taught in them for a long time. The Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers is also chiefly concerned with technical instruction, but it is open to the general public and thus the courses are followed by persons of very varied occupations: employees, technicians, engineers, foremen, young people or older folks, already earning their living but who wish to acquire a general culture. The Ecole des Hautes Etudes, on the other hand, addresses itself to a public of specialists, generally the students hoping to become professors, and who come there to learn the latest methods of scientific research. It is above all <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ school of higher learning for the

training of intellectual workers on original lines. M. SIMIAND teaches there, following MM. LANDRY and AUPETIT. No examination is connected with this school - which is composed of two Chairs, one of History and Economic Theory, the other of Economic Statistics - , and the lack of examination gives greater liberty to the professor. Finally, at the Collège de France, a course is given on the Factors of Economic and Social Life (1), and a course on the History of Labor (1 bis ) and <sup>at</sup> the Faculty of Letters a Course on the History of Social Economics (2) and a course on ~~the History of Social Economics~~ Economic History. (3)

This great variety of chairs is an indication of the lack of unanimity of opinion in France as to what is the nature and the real place of economic science. Are they a branch of Mathematics, of History or of Commercial Science ? Nobody knows exactly. Besides, the question is not of any great importance. But it is certain that the feeling is growing from day to day that no engineer, historian, business man or statesman can do without a training on Social Economics. This is why, in the absence of a special Faculty of economic and social science the teaching of this branch of learning has been introduced into institutions of the most varied nature.

On the other hand, Sociology is taught exclusively in

- (1) Given by M. MARION  
(1 bis) Given by M. Georges RENARD  
(2) Given by M. BOUGLE  
(3) Given by M. HAUSER.

- x. Presently member of the Chamber of Deputies for Corse  
o. Presently General-Secretary of the Bank of France

xx occupied by Mr Pasquet presently fellow of the L. Spelman Rockefeller Memorial



the Faculty of Letters. Without hesitation, it has been linked up with the teaching of Philosophy. At present, four chairs of Sociology exist : one in Paris, one at Strasbourg, one at Dijon and one at Bordeaux. These are occupied respectively by MM. FAUCONNET, HALBWACHS, DAVY and RICHARD.

The teaching of Statistics has long occupied a very secondary position, represented by one chair at the Faculté de Droit of Paris, held by M. APTALION, and it is only since this last year that students have been permitted to choose Statistics as one of the subjects for their examination. However, three years ago distinct progress was made by the creation, with the cooperation of all the Faculties (Law, Medicine, Science and Letters), of an Institute of Statistics, which was organised chiefly through the influence of M. Lucien MARCH (1) and of M. Emile BOREL (2). There the technique of Statistics, together with the elements of Mathematics, is taught. Fifteen students are taking the course this year. It has its headquarters in the Office of the CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT, 173, Boulevard St Germain.

To sum up : a great effort has been made during the last 50 years to introduce into France the teaching of economic, political and social sciences. But this teaching is very scattered, although centered chiefly in the Facultés de Droit and in

(1) Formerly Director of the Statistique Générale of France.

(2) Professor of Mathematics at the Faculty of Science, Minister of the Marine.

the Faculty of Letters. In the provinces, these Faculties are indeed the only centers. In Paris, however, instruction of this kind is given in institutions of a very varied nature. But if we examine the spirit in which it is taught, we perceive that the professors who are concerned with this branch of education, in spite of very great differences of training, are all working towards a common aim. The professors who, in France, are teaching the social Sciences have been led to the study of these subjects through their interest in History, or Philosophy, Law, Mathematics and even engineering science. However, all, or nearly all, look upon the Social Sciences as positive sciences based on observation, and feel that the same methods applied to the exact sciences should be applied more and more to their own field of enquiry. Political doctrines of a practical nature; social and economic ideals are coming to be very sharply distinguished from exact descriptions and analyses of scientific data. The old quarrels between different schools - except in a few belated and intolerant circles - have disappeared almost everywhere. Thus it is to be regretted that the unconscious cooperation of all these scholars has not the opportunity to make itself more clearly felt - as it would be felt and without hampering individual freedom - if a Faculty of Economic and Social Science existed, where Economy, Sociology, Statistics and Political Science would all be studied and taught. (1)

To day it pursues purely practical aims. (1) We might also mention certain institutions - such as the Institut d'Urbanisme created by the City of Paris - and the Musée Social where functions are very much restricted to day - but which at one time had accumulated very precious social data



### THE ORGANISATION OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCHES.

If we pass from teaching to scientific research-work, - in which the ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION is particularly interested - the first thing that strikes us is the very individualistic nature of scientific research in France. The men who have distinguished themselves most in the social economic sciences -for instance COURNOT TARDE, WALRAS and even DURKHEIM - worked alone.

It is only very recently that the necessity has been felt for collective organisations for the research and elaboration of material, and up to the present time, no organisation of this kind has been established - with the sole exception of the Statistique Générale of France, whose remarkably competent staff under the direction, first of M.MARCH, and to-day of M.HUBER, publishes the admirable Bulletin de la Statistique Générale of France, where are to be found first-rate scientific articles.

But the Statistique Générale of France is not a teaching institution; it is a branch of government administration with no connection with the University, whose activities are limited naturally, by its official administrative role.

Besides this bureau, we must mention, however, the work done by the Institute of Statistics, where M.MARCH has organised, in cooperation with the Statistical Institute of Harvard, the publication of graphical representations business movements, which appear, every three months, in the Revue Politique et Parlementaire.

But with the exception of this limited enterprise - which is almost entirely the result of one man's work, - in none of our teaching institutions does there exist any statistical organisation provided with a competent staff and the material necessary for the elaboration of every kind of numerical data on the basis of which, in America for example, so many precious studies are made which make it possible to follow economic and social phenomena from day to day. An organisation of this kind, if created, would not limit its services to one University, or to one Institution, but would be at the disposal of all research workers, provided they fulfilled certain conditions.

At present, the "workshops" of scientific research are confined to certain reading-rooms (Salles de Travail) in the Faculté de Droit and the Faculté des Lettres, or to certain "Institutes" established in these Faculties, and both the reading-rooms and Institutes are generally endowed with a completely insufficient amount of material resources.

Among these institutes, we must mention the Institut de Droit comparé (Institute of Comparative Law) of Lyon, created four years ago and directed by <sup>Professor</sup> ~~Antoine~~ LAMBERT and ANTONELLI, which has already published 13 exceedingly interesting volumes on the lines followed by Professor COMMONS of the University of Wisconsin; Then the Centre de Documentation de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure, directed by M. BOUGLE, and finally l'Institut d'Etude et de Documentation économique et sociale of Bordeaux. These three last

institutions are endowed with such meagre resources that they have never been able to follow up their researches for any length of time. A private benefactor, M. Albert KAHN, supplies the Centre de Documentation de l'Ecole Normale with funds, but its budget does not exceed Fifteen thousand francs. A year ago The Salle de Statistique de la Faculté de Droit de Paris was deprived of its meagre budget of 5.000. It is no longer possible even to pay a librarian to look after the rich collection of documents and books which was given to this institution by the Statistical Society of Paris.

It is here however that the future professors of Political Economy receive special preparations under the direction of certain professors of the Faculté de Droit, for the competitive examination known as the "Concours d'Agrégation". These young men, who come from all the Universities in France, who have all passed their doctorate in economic and social science and some of whom are already teaching in Universities have no facilities whatsoever at their disposal. It would however be easy to organise cooperative research work for them - as has already been done - if only one could provide them with the necessary resources (stenographer, secretary, adding machines, etc...)

As for the Institute of Bordeaux, its budget does not exceed five thousand francs, provided by M. Albert KAHN. It has concentrated its efforts on the publication of a bibliographical

1/ whose Director is Professor Gaëtan Pélissier



Journal of Social Science. The Institute at Lyon receives 15.000 frs from a private benefactor.

We must mention in this connection the teaching of Economics at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes already discussed, because the instruction given - in this branch of learning as in all others taught at the school - is of a cooperative nature, the professors and students collaborating together in the same research work. Here, too, material resources are unfortunately quite inadequate.

In default of collective organisation, the research workers find to-day their common ground in the various Reviews.

Under this heading, we must mention principally three publications :

LA REVUE D'ECONOMIE POLITIQUE, l'ANNEE SOCIOLOGIQUE and the JOURNAL DE LA SOCIETE DE STATISTIQUE DE PARIS.

The Revue d'Economie politique<sup>(1)</sup> was founded by M. GIDE more than 35 years ago. It corresponds, in its views, if not in its importance, to the American Economic Review. It rejects all economic dogmatisation. It encourages in every way original work. For the last three years, it has undertaken to publish, under the title of "La France Economique", a description of the economic life of France <sup>throughout</sup> ~~through~~ the year. These volumes, three

(1) The editorial staff of this review includes MM. GIDE, LANDRY, AUERTIT, APTALION, HUBER, RIST, SIMIAND, TRUCHY, GERMAIN, MARTIN, LESCURE, etc...

of which have already appeared, (the last has no less than 450 pages) and on which thirty writers collaborated) aim at giving an impartial analysis of the evolution and the economic and social transformation of France, without preoccupation of party or of doctrine, and free from the obtrusion of any private interests.

L'Année Sociologique founded by Durkheim, interrupted by the war and now once more appearing is the most representative organ of the French Sociology. It includes in its domain the whole field of social, religious, anthropological and economic research. It furnishes every year a critical bibliography of books on these subjects published in France and elsewhere. It also includes original studies, articles of real scientific value, many of which have become classics. (1)

The Journal of the Statistical Society publishes the communications sent in by the members of this Society, and the discussions which arise around them. It has often published articles of great scientific value. Together with the Bulletin de la Statistique Générale mentioned above, it constitutes a very precious source of information.

The effort which is being made to develop scientific research work in the field of economical and social analysis is shown also by the numerous theses which are published every year at the Faculties of Law and of Letters.

Manus

(1) The editors are : MM. Marcel ~~MARS~~, SIMIAND, BOUGLE, HUBERT and FAUCONNET.

Many of these are excellent monographs, and it is largely in this way that the supply of economic and sociological literature is increased in France.

#### IV

##### PROPOSALS FOR REFORM

If we now ask ourselves what would be the best means of furthering scientific researches in the social, economic and sociological field, the following conclusions are suggested ~~by~~ by the examination of the present situation.

We must distinguish between two important categories of study.- both equally interesting from the scientific point of view but which do not require the same kind of encouragement, nor perhaps, at present at least, the same degree of encouragement :

(1) On the one hand, Studies belonging strictly to the realm of Sociology : History, Religious Sociology, comparative linguistics, anthropology, etc...

(2) The study of strictly social and economic phenomena ; ~~this~~  
*This* is what we mean by the different kinds of encouragement needed by these two categories of study:

The study of primitive society, of comparative religion, of anthropology have long since awakened a lively interest in the general public. The problems of origins whether it be History, Religion or Social life, have never failed to rouse interest in France. No one has ever doubted that the study of these questions



requires the use of purely scientific methods. Dogmatism founded on prejudice, dilettantism are to be met with in this sphere as in all others, but these defects are soon seen and pointed out. It is sufficient to draw up the list - which is long - of the Reviews the Societies, the Chairs which, in the Collège de France, at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes, at the School of Oriental Languages and the Faculty of Letters are given over to the study of the history of Civilisation, of Languages and Religions, of ethnical groups, ancient and modern, to get an impression of the important position which these studies occupy in the esteem of the world of learning and of public instruction.

On the <sup>contrary</sup> ~~other hand~~, it is only very recently that a serious effort has been made - or attempted - to introduce the general application of scientific methods to the analysis of social and economic phenomena. Public opinion is ignorant of this movement. The public is repelled by the dry subject-matter of scientific studies. People think that the newspapers keep them sufficiently well-informed on economic questions. Business men are only slowly beginning to realise the services which the impartial and methodical study of the questions in which they are interested can render them. As for research workers, they are frequently discouraged by the expense involved by all serious economic and social enquiries, and even by all statistical investigations which are pursued at any length. The attempts which have been made in France to establish permanent Archives of social and economic documentation - such as

exist in Germany, at Cologne and Frankfort, or at the United-States at the Business School of Columbia University - are embryonic. In this connection, there is little to mention except the Office des Valeurs Mobilières at N° 5, Rue Gaillon. The effect of this situation is seen in the frequently deplorable fashion in which social and economic problems, when they are brought forcefully to the notice of the public, are treated in parliament or by the Press. Controversies as to terminology predominate over the discussion of questions of facts. The most ridiculous statements and denials of most well-established truths find credence among men who are otherwise highly educated. Nowhere does there exist an entirely independent scientific organisation, which could - as does for example the National Research Council in the United States - bring forward in important controversies of public interest the elements of fact which are incontestable and uncontested in the absence of which all discussion is vain.

Nowhere, moreover, does there exist an independent center where there might be trained by the handling and the analysis of documents and by the practice of economic investigations, a highly qualified staff of which the need is more and more felt by important business enterprises, by the great national and international commissions to which are entrusted the study of economic problems in which the entire world is interested. A staff of this kind can only be trained in an institution which

is free from all private interference, industrial or commercial in an institution where the pursuit of truth is the leading principle of all the work done there (1)

For all these reasons, and without underestimating for a moment the importance of sociological studies, we consider that it is the economic and social sciences in France, in the social state of this country, which stand in the most pressing need of encouragement.

Moreover, the two branches of learning distinguished above ( P.I4) , even if it is admitted that both deserve the same amount of encouragement, do not need the same kind of encouragement.

With regard to the first category - Sociological studies - the kind of encouragement which seems best fitted to meet its needs is financial assistance given to research-workers for a definite piece of research work, or for the organisation of linguistic or anthropological Commissions.

With regard to the second field of study - in the economic and social spheres - admitted that the efforts of individuals and grants for such and such a piece of work can accomplish certain very definite results, it is however collective organisation and collective resources put at the

(1) There does exist a society of Economic Study which publishes an extremely interesting Daily Bulletin. The Society has abundant funds which are supplied by a group of captains of industry. Its organ however interesting it may be, is clearly influenced by the interests of those who supply the funds.



disposal of all the research-workers which appear to be most urgently needed.

If indeed we leave aside for a moment work done in Economic History - which has ~~been~~ great and permanent utility, but which is generally accomplished by individuals - what exactly is the aim of the economic and social sciences ?

Their aim is above all - as is the case of the medical and biological sciences - to understand and interpret the present. But the present cannot possibly be understood, by reason of its vast and complex nature , by any one man alone. It only becomes comprehensible through collective observation carried on through a given period and directed towards the various aspects of our social organisation. Moreover, the study of the present necessitates the comparison of the social life of one group with that of other contemporary - or quondam-groups.

The scientific organisation of a social and economic survey of France would entail, accordingly, these categories of studies which would require to be carried on simultaneously.

I) A systematic elaboration and a suitable presentation of the vast amount of statistical data which is being collected at the present time by Government administrations, by private enterprises (Reports and schedules of Banks, Corporations, Trade-Unions, Cooperative Societies, etc...) This would constitute a quantitative and comparative study aiming at defining

the correlation and interdependence of the various economic phenomena which would permit, to a certain extent, the prediction of the future.

2) The observation and continued description of the changes which are taking place in the mechanism, the organisation and the condition of the great economic and social life of this country (Concentration of enterprises, the shifting of the centers of industry and of the markets, the development and activity of employers and workmen 's associations, the evolution of social and economic legislation, the financial position of the country - monetary changes, movements of commerce, distribution of income, balance of trade, etc ...)

This kind of observation presupposes a great deal of division of labor and a high degree of specialisation among the observers. Such specialisation would make it possible to train high competent men and women in each branch of study. These would be able to follow from day to day the progress of a given important activity or institution, and to keep the public and the Savants incessantly informed, without themselves taking any direct part in the economic activities they are observing, and thus without being themselves involuntary influenced by the different interests at the basis of these activities.

3) Comparisons with the institutions and the legislation of other countries, and of the economic phenomena abroad in which France is particularly interested. These comparisons and

studies would be made by means of enquiries carried on in various countries. The Social and Economic Fellowships created by the ROCKFELLER Memorial Foundation already constitute very precious assistance and a great encouragement in this sphere.

A general program of this kind may seem to be ambitious. It is easy to see however that it is even now partly and fragmentarily realised.

The aim set before themselves by a certain scientific Reviews such as the Bulletin de la Statistique Générale of France or the Revue d'Economie Politique is to encourage and to organise a kind of survey continually kept up to date of the Economic life of France.

In the field of Sociology, l'Année Sociologique has taken upon itself the task of drawing up a definite scheme of research, and this scheme is being by degrees realised by the writers who publish articles in this Review.

Publications of this nature, if they had more important financial resources at their disposal, could vastly extend their programs, encourage further researches which at present are too costly to be undertaken, and gradually accustom the reading public to a scientific and objective treatment of questions the study and solution of which they have hitherto abandoned to men to whom the term "interested parties" applies only too well. These Reviews would be ready to take their place



as the organs of publication of an Institute of Social and Economic Sciences, if such an Institute should one day be created (as I hope that it may be), just as the "Journal de la Société Statistique" is the official organ of the statistical Society.

It would not be very difficult, either, to put the Salles de Travail (Reading-Rooms) of the Universities in a position to furnish research-workers with the material resources and with the staff which are absolutely essential for the elaboration of statistical material. It is only the necessary funds which are lacking. The money which would be sufficient to equip them would not amount to a vast sum.

It is certain that the most attractive way of assembling, from this time on, the rather scattered efforts which we have described in this Report would be to gather them together in an efficient Institute of Social and Economical Sciences, like the one which is in working order at BRUSSELS, thanks to the generosity of M. SOLWAY.

The creation of such an Institute seems to us difficult, however, at present at least, for various reasons which it is not necessary to discuss here.

On the other hand, we believe that it would be easy, from now on, to form a group of men who are accustomed to apply scientific methods to the study of social, economic and sociological problems. These men would come from the chief institu-

tions of Higher Learning where these problems are now being studied, both in the provinces and in Paris. They would draw up, collectively, a list of <sup>the</sup> research problems which seemed to them most important to organise and encourage at the present time, and also a list of men considered by them best qualified to undertake the study of them. They would send in to the Rockefeller Memorial Foundation the result of their deliberations, which would then determine in what way their proposals could be developed. The very formation of a group of this kind having as its aim to direct and encourage scientific work in this field would in itself be of utility. A program of research work drawn up under such circumstances would have indisputable value. The realisation of such a program would probably represent the most significant progress which could be accomplished in the sphere of the economic and social sciences during the next few years. A group of this kind - small at first - could later be enlarged in the same proportion as the work undertaken by it was extended.

*Charles Rist*

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