

THE APPROACH TO ECONOMICS.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty associated with the teaching of Economics at the secondary school level is that of giving students a precise idea of the nature and scope of the subject. The student of Geography, History, Business Principles, etc., generally has in his mind some sort of "definition" (whether it be conscious or subconscious) of the subject and consequently a fairly precise idea of its field. To have at the outset some definite idea of what a subject "is all about" will greatly facilitate the recognition and understanding of relevant topics and their relationships. The question "What is Economics about?" is rendered particularly difficult by the fact that the approach of professional economists has undergone revolutionary changes in the last twenty years. The alternative to ignoring the problem is to present Economics as a collection of isolated and unrelated topics. This is to drain the subject of its scientific and analytical value, whereas it is this value which must surely be the main justification for teaching Economics.

I believe that the "Scarcity Approach" is the only satisfactory introduction to Economics as a social science. If the essential nature of the economic problem can be grasped by the student he will have acquired the means of recognising the economic aspects of problems and the scientific tools with which to analyse and explain them.

To the Fourth Year student, however, "relative scarcity" and its social response, "the economic system", are concepts with little relationship to the world he knows. The Economic Problem too often tends to be regarded as just another isolated topic in Economics and its real significance missed. The economic problem might well be shown as just one of a great many problems which arise in a modern society, and "economising" as just one aspect of many aspects of human behaviour. This approach, I feel, could go far towards presenting Economics to the pupil in a real world perspective. It would certainly help him to distinguish the "economic" from the "non-economic" and provide him with an analytical approach to problems quite distinct from the approach of the Historian, the Geographer and the Physical Scientist.

"Problems of our environment" is a first experiment along the lines suggested. I should be very interested to hear how other teachers are introducing Economics to Fourth Year pupils.

PROBLEMS OF OUR ENVIRONMENT.

There are a great many problems associated with life in a community. There are political problems or problems connected with the wise administration of our community affairs both at home and abroad. There is the legal problem of drawing up a set of rules protecting our rights and property; and it is part of the legal problem to ensure that these rules are observed or enforced. Ethical problems arise in a community in relation to the "rightness" or "wrongness" of our behaviour. We have a geographical problem according to which we must adapt or mould our lives to the physical features of our region, such as climate, landform and mineral resources. We have a technical problem which is the problem of constantly