

CONTRIBUTIONS OF GERMAN AND AMERICAN JESUITS TO ECONOMICS: THE LAST 100 YEARS

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CONTRIBUTIONS OF GERMAN AND AMERICAN JESUITS TO ECONOMICS: THE LAST 100 YEARS

Religion cannot produce grain; it cannot do away with physical evil. Heinrich Pesch, S.J.¹

Some years ago, in a book entitled *Hyphenated Priests*, I explained why this priest became an economist. Briefly, it was in answer to the call of the popes in their social encyclicals for priests to share in the task of building a Christian social order. Priests inclined to answer the call were advised by the encyclicals to master one or other of the social sciences -- lest they do more harm than good.

.....
... there is a final reason beyond those already given. The final reason is, and was, a vision of the Judgment Day and of the Judge saying: "I was unemployed, Joseph, and you supported me." In talks I have given over the years to people working in the unemployment insurance program, especially government officials and representatives of management, I have urged them to see the unemployed as Christ Himself, who will some day say to them, "Because you did it to the unemployed, you did it to Me." Joseph Becker, S.J. [Becker 1991, pp. 50, 56]

Economic issues such as the fair price, the just wage, and the charging of interest first attracted the attention of Catholic scholars as long ago as the Middle Ages. That history, however, is not our concern here.² Rather, it is with the development of modern Catholic social teaching which many regard as originating in 1891 with Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, and with the contributions of Jesuit scholars to that teaching and in its application to everyday economic affairs.

Any account of the contributions of German and American Jesuits to economics over the past 100 years must begin with the German economist Heinrich Pesch and *Rerum Novarum* wherein Pesch's work originates. As his thinking on economic affairs matured, Pesch established a small study group where two other German Jesuits -- Oswald von Nell-Breuning and Gustav Gundlach -- played key roles. Von Nell-Breuning *sub silentio* participated in the preparation of a draft of *Quadragesimo Anno*.³ At least two laypersons in this group -- Goetz Briefs and Franz Mueller -- emigrated to the United States where Briefs joined the faculty of Georgetown University and Mueller joined the faculty of St. Thomas College in Minnesota. Both played a role in the establishment of the Catholic

¹ Franz Mueller's translation [see Mueller 1951, p. 151] which is used by Mulcahy who acknowledges it to be superior to his own [Mulcahy 1952a, p. 40].

² See Thomas O. Nitsch [pp. 1-90] for more on this topic in the general context of social economics.

³ See "Goetz A. Briefs" in the December 1983 *Review of Social Economy*.

Economics Association in 1941 which some 25 years later became the Association for Social Economics.

Two American Jesuits, Thomas Divine and Bernard Dempsey (neither of whom were formal students of Pesch), are regarded as the founding fathers of the Association. Oddly, these two men -- both trained in economics -- saw things much differently. Divine was closely allied with mainstream economic thought. Dempsey, on the other hand, was powerfully influenced by Pesch's economic thinking which at that time and for some time afterward was known as "solidarism." Eventually, Divine's view became the dominant perspective within the Association [Waters 1990, pp. 92-93].

Dempsey and Divine were joined by several other American Jesuits including Leo Brown and Joseph Becker both of whom specialized in labor-market problems: Brown in labor-management relations and Becker in employment security. Both become leading experts in their respective domains and probably are the most influential of the American Jesuits in practical economic affairs. Brown became a major labor mediator and arbitrator; Becker became the most outstanding student of unemployment insurance of his time.

There are several other American Jesuits who are noteworthy, including Richard Mulcahy who published *The Economics of Heinrich Pesch* to bring Pesch's ideas to those who do not read German, and several American lay persons who were trained and inspired by the Jesuits. Here I include among others Josef Solterer*, William Waters*, Peter Danner*, Stephen Worland*, Gladys Gruenberg, Rupert Ederer, Louis Buckley, Frank Mueller*, Thomas Nitsch, Arnold McKee, and Catherine Knoop*.⁴ For those who would like to explore this body of knowledge further, the references section below contains a significant number of additional citations.

In the following, I focus on the contributions of six Jesuit economists. Four are Jesuit priests: Pesch and von Nell-Breuning who are German and Dempsey and Becker who are American.⁵ Two of them -- Briefs and Waters -- are lay persons whom I think of as "Jesuits without the collar." Of the six, five have direct ties to one another. Von Nell-Breuning was a student of Pesch in Germany as was Briefs. Waters was a student of Briefs in the United States, and the American Dempsey was

⁴ Everyone enumerated herein with the exception of Ederer, Gruenberg, and Mueller served as president of the Association for Social Economics; those marked with an asterisk are recipients of the Thomas Divine Award for lifetime contributions to social economics and the social economy.

⁵ See Gladys W. Gruenberg for more on the contributions of American Jesuit priest-economists to the social apostolate [1991, pp. 532-545] and for more on the work of Leo Brown, S.J. [1981].

powerfully influenced by Pesch and by von Nell-Breuning.⁶ All five are solidarists who think about economics and economic affairs in a way which I have come to regard as distinct and which originates with the Jesuit Pesch.

Becker alone among the six has no such direct ties of dependency to the others as an economist.⁷ More so than the other five, he focused his energies on issues such as the adequacy of benefits in unemployment insurance and the impact of experience rating in unemployment insurance which required enormous applied-research efforts over an extended period of time. But without question Becker is one with the other five in drawing from Catholic social thought in his day-to-day professional work and thereby contributing importantly to Catholic social economics in the 20th century. Indeed, in the author's judgment his lifetime contributions, as measured by his record of publications and the public honors accorded him, are the most substantial of the six and he better than anyone else represents the very best that the Jesuits have to offer to the discipline of economics and to an understanding of economic affairs.

Since our concern herein is with their contributions as economists, there is no need to differentiate any further between Jesuit priests and "Jesuits without the collar." Below each of the six is treated in turn as teacher of the one who follows. Becker is covered last because he is not part of this direct student-teacher lineage.

Heinrich Pesch, S.J.

The economic-science component of Catholic social economics is anchored firmly in the work of Heinrich Pesch. His *Lehrbuch der Nationalökonomie* is regarded as a commentary on *Rerum Novarum* and a source book for *Quadragesimo Anno*. His "religion cannot produce grain" is a warning that in matters of human material need more than faith alone is required.

Pesch took up economic science for the same reason Leo XIII wrote *Rerum Novarum*: the miserable conditions of the working class. A four-year period of study in England in the 1880s was decisive

⁶ Dempsey referred to Pesch's five-volume work *Lehrbuch der Nationalökonomie* as "the supreme intellectual achievement inspired by the encyclicals" [Dempsey 1958, pg. 70]. Further, Dempsey prepared the English edition of von Nell-Breuning's commentary on *Quadragesimo Anno*.

⁷ There is no mention of or reference to the other five in Becker's published work. Further, as a graduate student of Becker the author has no recollection of any reference by Becker to the other five either in his graduate seminars or in his personal direction of the author's thesis research.

because it sensitized Pesch to the miseries of the working masses and some years later led to his taking up the study of economics [Mulcahy 1952a, pp 2-3]. In addition to the *Lehrbuch*, Pesch produced more than 100 other publications before his death in 1926. Thus, from the very beginning, a concern for the working class and for conditions in the workplace has been a dominant theme of Catholic social economics.

The centerpiece of Pesch's life work is his social system of labor which occupies the middle ground between the individualism of the capitalist system and the collectivism of the socialist system and which for that reason has been called "the third way."⁸ Pesch's system more commonly is called "solidarism" and is more aptly described as an architectural sketch for a reconstructed economic order than a set of detailed blue-line drawings.

Absolutely central to Pesch's economics is his conceptualization of human beings. Pesch rejects the individualists' conception of the human being as basically self-sufficient and self-determined and the collectivists' view of him/her as mere member or functionary of a homogenous, self-dependent whole. Instead, humans are inseparably individual and social, simultaneously an independent free being and a dependent social being [Mueller 1977, pg. 295; Schuyler, pg. 226].

Consistent with his foundations in Thomistic philosophy, Pesch regards human beings as body-soul composites. It is the body which gives the human being his/her materiality. It is the soul which supplies him/her with the two characteristics -- free will and intellect -- which make him/her truly unique. Most fundamentally, Pesch's conception of humans is that they are made by God in His own image and likeness. This view underpins literally the entire body of Peschian economic thought [Mueller 1951-1952, pg. 489; Schuyler, pp. 230-231].

There is little in the way of specific details in Pesch's system, but this is of no crippling consequence since Catholic social economics insists that, without exception in economic affairs, humans are far more important than the system. Human beings truly exist; economic systems are a manner of speaking. John Paul II calls attention to this distinction in *Laborem Exercens*.

⁸ Interest in mapping "the third way" reached a peak in the years following *Quadragesimo Anno* but never really became deeply rooted in Catholic social economics. Nothing in the encyclicals of John Paul II over the last 20 years re-affirms the importance of finding "a third way." Instead, Catholic social economists today are challenged to help reconstruct the market system in ways that help it better serve human material need.

Everything contained in the concept of capital in the strict sense is only a collection of things. Man, as the subject of work, and independently of the work he does -- man alone is a person [John Paul II, pg. 31].

Moreover, in the judgment of the author, economic systems are to serve human material need and because that need may be different in different places, times, and circumstances, some differences in the details of solidarist economic systems are desirable, if not necessary.

As noted earlier, Pesch directly influenced a small group of fellow Germans known as the “Study Group” or “Study Circle.” In addition to Gundlach, von Nell-Breuning, Mueller, and Briefs already mentioned, the group included Wilhelm Schwer, Paul Jostock, Heinrich Rommen, and Theodor Brauer [Mueller 1940, p. 337].

Pesch’s influence extended to the United States in part as a result of the emigration of some members of the Study Group. But two of his followers were Americans: the Jesuit economists Richard Mulcahy and Bernard Dempsey. Mulcahy authored the only book-length commentary on Pesch’s work in English which is all the more significant because only a very small portion of Pesch’s work has been translated.⁹ Dempsey’s *The Functional Economy* owes much to the work of Pesch and is one of the finest examples of scholarly work in the Catholic social-economics tradition.

Oswald von Nell-Breuning, S.J. and Bernard Dempsey, S.J.

Von Nell-Breuning is included in our small company of Jesuits who have contributed greatly to social economics and the social economy even though little is known about von Nell-Breuning’s professional contributions apart from what appears in the *Review of Social Economy*.¹⁰ Even though he seems to have lived in the shadow of his mentor Heinrich Pesch,¹¹ von Nell-Breuning is noteworthy because he is reported to have drafted *Quadragesimo Anno* for Pius XI [Mueller 1964, p. 132].

⁹ Rupert Ederer’s English translation of the five volumes of Pesch’s *magnum opus* has been accepted for publication by The Edwin Mellen Press.

¹⁰ His four articles in the *Review of Social Economy* are cited in the references section. Three first appeared elsewhere in German; the fourth was published originally in Latin. Each one was translated into English by a different American colleague.

¹¹ Von Nell-Breuning lived past age 90; he died in Germany in the early 1990s.

Shortly after the public release of that encyclical letter in 1931, von Nell-Breuning published his extended commentary *Reorganization of Social Economy: The Social Encyclical Developed and Explained*. Several years later Bernard Dempsey published the English edition. In his commentary, von Nell-Breuning raises the very same question solidarists in later years have been asked: What does the vocational order look like?

Since the question of vocational order has, by the Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, been made practical and open for general discussion once more, explanations may be expected in this book as to what such a vocational order would look like, and how it can be brought about. This is a fair question, but an answer cannot be given; not because nothing can be said about it, but rather because so much could be said that it would exceed the space available and would demand a separate book. The deciding factor is that the Encyclical purposely restricts itself to discussing the principles of a vocational order of society and economics, but carefully avoids entering into the description of a *functional order in the concrete*. Since, in this instance, we have to interpret the Encyclical, and not to answer questions that are brought up by it without any comment, this restriction seems imperative. Furthermore, it is by far more important to study the Encyclical's principal ideas thoroughly, than to deal with these questions of organization. And, let us frankly admit that frequently the reason for the great interest in learning what a vocation order would look like is not so much zeal to begin immediately with its realization, but doubt whether the Holy Father's noble ideas are really possible and practicable. Some fear that Pius XI may have become the victim of visionary ideals. Since we do not share these fears, it seems unnecessary to take them into account by bringing the proof for the possibility of such an order in the form of an example [von Nell-Breuning, pp. 5-6; emphasis added].

Von Nell-Breuning's "functional order in the concrete" foretells the title and the central theme of Dempsey's *The Functional Economy: The Bases of Economic Organization* by which Dempsey meant the principles which are foundational to a functional or organic economic system [Roets, pg. 550]. *The Functional Economy*, which in fact is a collection of articles previously published, is a major contribution to Catholic social economics because it applies the principles of conventional economics such as marginal utility and substitution *along with* the principles of Catholic social teaching such as subsidiarity and commutative justice to everyday economic affairs. The subjects covered in some of the chapters are especially illustrative: the worker as person; basis of just wages; just price in a functional economy; subsidiarity -- a basis for functional adjustment.

Further, and most importantly, Dempsey understands the importance of the question on vocational order raised in von Nell-Breuning's commentary on *Quadragesimo Anno* but set aside. Dempsey's answer, however, does not take the form of concrete examples. Rather he asserts that the question relates to the nature of economic institutions and he articulates three principles -- consistency, feasibility, and economic rationality -- which provide instructions as to the functions and structures of economic institutions reconstructed along the lines suggested in the encyclical.

Consistency, according to Dempsey, means "a harmony between the structuring given to man's economic activity and the conclusions of an adequate philosophy of human nature and human action" and feasibility is defined operationally and administratively as "what is socially and politically possible" [Dempsey 1958, pp. 327-329]. Economic rationality to Dempsey means the impact of the reconstruction suggested by the so-called vocational order principally on production and distribution.

Will the social planner's scheme help to produce more and better goods, in a better way, with better distribution? How much more? How much better? [Dempsey 1958, pg. 331].

Dempsey died at age 57.¹² We can only speculate as to what his contributions might have been had he lived another 20 years. Even so, the last chapter of *The Functional Economy* provides some hints in the form of Dempsey's statement that the central problem facing American business leadership is how to "maintain democratic government and personal freedom in an economy where the high standard of living is bound up with the efficiency of very large aggregates of capital goods" [Dempsey, pg. 460]. The rest of the last chapter intimates that Dempsey likely would have studied the ways in which it is possible to reconstruct economic institutions to facilitate the everyday practice of the three principles of justice: commutative justice, distributive justice, and contributive justice.

Goetz Briefs

Goetz Briefs as mentioned above was a member of Pesch's Study Group. At the height of a formidable academic career, Briefs fled his native Germany in 1934 when his life was threatened by the forces loyal to Hitler and National Socialism. He served on the economics faculty at Columbia University and Catholic University. His longest service, however, came at Georgetown University where he retired in 1970 after serving 33 years on the faculty. In terms of the five solidarist members

¹² For more on Dempsey's life see Roets.

identified above, Briefs is one important bridge between the Germans Pesch and von Nell-Breuning and the Americans Dempsey and Waters.

In addition to being a solidarist, Briefs was an institutionalist in the sense that he insisted that institutions matter much.¹³ His son characterized Briefs as a “Christian personalist” which to the author’s knowledge is the first time anyone in economics is formally portrayed as such. Today, no doubt, Briefs would enthusiastically embrace the personalism of John Paul II as applied in his social encyclicals.

Two themes, both very much consistent with his solidarist/personalist convictions, run through Briefs’ life work. The first is his criticism of collectivism whether in the form of the central state, syndicalist state, or smaller units of society which threaten the personhood of their members. The second is his criticism of “classical liberalism and individualism as pseudo social philosophy no less than as ruling public philosophy” [Henry Briefs, pp. 217].

As with other social economists, Briefs was not able to reconcile economic efficiency with the principles of his social philosophy. At times, it seems that economic efficiency imposes constraints or limits on the attainment of social improvement. At other times, Briefs’ anthropological-societal norms constrain or limit the achievement of economic objectives such as allocative efficiency and productivity growth.

A short commentary like this is a disservice to Briefs and his life work, some of which still is not available in English, but his views regarding trade unions are worth our notice in part because Briefs’ service on the Georgetown faculty was as a labor economist. Predictably, as a student of Pesch, Briefs saw trade unions at least in earlier stages of the development of capitalism as necessary, self-organized, self-help solidarist institutions. But later -- in the 1950s and 1960s -- Briefs came to see trade unions which have a cartel-like structure as subordinating their members to certain organizational objectives. That is, he saw them as one type of collectivist institution dangerous because of their tendencies to depersonalize their members. Thus his vocal criticism of the closed shop.

¹³ In the following the author borrows heavily from Henry Brief’s review of his father’s contributions to social economics and the social economy in the December 1983 *Review of Social Economy*. This issue is devoted entirely to the social economics of Goetz Briefs.

William Waters

Of the six, William Waters had perhaps the best grasp of the vast published works of Catholic social economists, no doubt as part of his work as editor-in-chief of the *Review of Social Economy* for twenty years beginning in 1965. From the very start of his editorship, Waters encouraged a broadening of perspective within the Association for Social Economics to include institutionalists, humanists, radicals, feminists, and environmentalists. As editor-in-chief, he probably did more than anyone else at that time to not only welcome them into the Association but also to embrace them as intellectual brothers and sisters. He was honored in the Summer 1990 issue of the *Review of Social Economy* as a “distinguished member of the Association for Social Economic.” Earlier, he was named the first recipient of the Thomas Divine Award for lifetime contributions to social economics and the social economy.

Waters was Jesuit in the sense that as an undergraduate student and also as a graduate student he was educated at American Jesuit institutions: Loyola College in Baltimore, and Georgetown University in Washington. He switched from history to economics when he entered Georgetown where he was influenced by Goetz Briefs and even more so by Josef Solterer. Waters’ dissertation focused on Schumpeter and the Schumpeterian emphasis remained central to Waters’ vision of economics and economic affairs throughout his professional work. In his presidential address to the Association for Social Economics in 1987 Waters said the following.

A realistic explication of the nature of the economy focuses upon the mechanism of [economic] change. The empirical reality is dynamic. Starting with this emphasis, the central role is given to the creative person as an alternative to the utility-calculating individual and is thus more compatible with the solidarist philosophical position than with the dominating classical one.

The economic process is ... essentially Schumpeterian centering upon a creative vision supported by funding that gives the economic creator access to society’s resources and brings forth an innovation. Characteristics of the innovational process [include] some Schumpeterian favorites such as dynamic competition, resistance, creative destruction and the universality of cyclical behavior in a private enterprise society [Waters 1988, pp. 122-123].

Waters quietly referred to himself as a “solidarist” but, in private conversations with the author, recognized the special liability which attends such a label with its greater meaning and acceptance in

Europe than America. Of late, a few Catholic social economists including Peter Danner and the author have replaced “solidarist” with “personalist.”

As already suggested, Waters was best known for his work as editor-synthesizer of the work of a vast array of social economists with widely different views on economics and economic affairs. At the same time, as researcher-author Waters’ contribution as a Jesuit came in the form of a small but important body of published work which is significant for its consistently high quality. The following is a sample. Social economics begins with and centers on a

view of human beings as unique persons affirming their individual absoluteness but sharing a common humanity as purposive, responsible and free; as transpersonal beings moving toward community with others to reflect the ultimate dignity of each; and as creative in [the sense] that an essential makeup [of the person] is the need for accomplishment.¹⁴

Finally, Waters had a special gift as teacher-mentor. The courses he taught over more than 40 years include history of economic thought, intermediate macro-economics, European economic history, principles, real-estate economics, and a special seminar on Marshall’s economics. Oddly, though the preliminary work had been completed, Waters never taught a course on Schumpeter’s economics. Waters can be considered the model Jesuit layperson in teaching, mentoring, editing, writing, and engaging others professionally and personally in ways which reaffirm their dignity even when he disagreed with them. He spent his entire scholarly life at DePaul University.

Joseph Becker, S.J.

Five books on employment security are the hard evidence of the contributions of Joseph Becker to his chosen field of specialization. *The Problem of Abuse in Unemployment Benefits: A Study of Limits* (1953) is the dissertation he completed at Columbia University for his doctorate in economics. In it he examines with extraordinary insight a question which has beset unemployment insurance since its very beginning in the 1930s. That is, How much is being paid to those for whom the benefits were never intended?

¹⁴ Quoted in “William R. Waters, Distinguished Member of the Association for Social Economics,” *Review of Social Economy*, Summer 1990.

Becker's study involves three limits. First, by concentrating on the problem of abuse, Becker addresses the central limit on the community's willingness to better provision the physical need of the unemployed through the unemployment insurance program. Second, the study is limited to the reconversion period following World War II. This limit, however, makes his investigation particularly valuable in the sense that by assessing abuse at a time when it is likely to be at a maximum, we are better able to generalize to other periods when by definition any abuse is likely to be less extensive. Becker refers to this as "the limiting case." Third, Becker's efforts do not yield precise answers. Rather, his conclusions put upper and lower limits to abuse and therefore he limits some of the guess work of those who participate in the decisions governing the operations of the program. Thus, the book is called "a study of limits."

Shared Government in Employment Security: A Study of Advisory Councils (1959) is a study in the application of the principle of subsidiarity to employment security. In it, Becker carefully examines the role and effectiveness of the councils which advise the state legislatures and state administrators on matters relating to the two divisions of employment security at the state level: unemployment insurance and the employment service. These advisory councils are either bipartite -- made up of representatives from labor and management -- or tripartite -- including as well public representatives -- and function as intermediate bodies in the governance of state employment security programs. As intermediate bodies in the social order, advisory councils embody the essence of the concept "vocational group" as underscored in *Quadragesimo Anno*.¹⁵

Becker's central finding based on first-hand observations of 19 state advisory councils at work is simple enough but most significant. The most important factor contributing to the effectiveness of state advisory councils is council membership. That is, the *who* of the system, more than any other factor, determines the council's effectiveness and that factor, Becker notes approvingly, is within the control of the state [Becker 1959, pg. 471].

Becker served as editor of *In Aid of the Unemployed* (1965) in which 15 colleagues address the alleviation and cure of unemployment after it has occurred. Excluded from the scope of the essays in this collection is the prevention of unemployment before it occurs. The essayists cover such programs as welfare, unemployment insurance, training, area development, and public works. Becker's own contribution is the chapter on the adequacy of benefits in unemployment insurance, a problem as elusive as the problem of abuse.

¹⁵ Indeed, even though *Quadragesimo Anno* is not included in the index, *Shared Government* [see pg. 33] explicitly confirms this linkage to the "vocational groups" of Pius XI's encyclical of 1931.

Guaranteed Income for the Unemployed: The Story of SUB (1968)¹⁶ is Becker's attempt to answer questions as to SUB's origins, development over time, success, impact on other social goals, and relationship to public unemployment insurance programs. Always the master of understatement, Becker describes his work as only "a one-man scouting expedition into a relatively unknown area and must be followed by larger expeditions before the region can be adequately mapped" [Becker 1968, pg. xviii]. And his overall appraisal is carefully measured: "... SUB's first decade must be judged a success" [Becker 1968, pg. 294].

Experience Rating in Unemployment Insurance: An Experiment in Competitive Socialism (1972) is the last of Becker's five major publications. In it, two questions are uppermost. First, has the choice of an experience-rated tax -- one in which the tax paid by the employer varies with the employer's experience with unemployment -- been a wise one? Second, have we made the right choice regarding the degree to which experience rating is used? As he has done so often before, Becker's conclusion is carefully drawn:

... if we choose to maintain a set of income maintenance programs that are closely geared to the market and operate like deferred wages, with benefits proportioned to wages and with taxes levied solely on payrolls and employers, unemployment insurance as presently constituted will be a necessary part of such a system and experience rating is likely to be considered a desirable part of unemployment insurance [Becker 1972, pg. 325].

The author's personal favorite publication is Becker's 1961 monograph *The Adequacy of Benefit Amount in Unemployment Insurance* which four years later appeared in his *In Aid of the Unemployed*. Here his wit and way with the language are on exhibit. And his wisdom. A sampling follows.

This preliminary discussion of norms gives the monograph the general proportions of a medieval castle -- it is almost half foundation -- but there is no other safe way to build in the morass of "adequacy." To change the metaphor -- it is precisely at this point, in the selection of norms, that the rabbit gets into the hat. Therefore the process

¹⁶ SUB -- Supplemental Unemployment Benefit -- is really a family of private unemployment insurance plans which at the time of his study covered two to three million workers and which are directly tied to the much larger public unemployment insurance programs.

of selection of norms should be as explicit and as open as possible. The review of norms serves the additional purpose of revealing my personal value judgments (they have probably influenced my selection and arrangement of the data) so that anyone who disagrees with my judgments can the more easily pinpoint the disagreement and substitute his own set of values [Becker 1961, pg. 10].

Years after the publication of his last book in the field of employment security, Becker was honored by the Interstate Conference of Employment Security Agencies for his lifetime contributions. He was the first person designated to receive an award of this type from the Interstate Conference and, most significantly, the award itself bears his name. In other words, to those who labor daily in the operations of employment security program Becker's contributions are a public model for research in this field.¹⁷

Becker is most noteworthy among these six Jesuits because his professional work is an explicit affirmation of his religious convictions. His "I was unemployed, Joseph, and you supported me" and his "because you did it to the unemployed, you did it to Me" indicates a remarkable convergence of faith and reason [see Becker 1991, pg 56].

Final Comments

Catholic social economics which owes much to Jesuits for its origins and development is barely visible in academic circles today. Perhaps this reflects the vocations crisis in the Jesuit order, the laicization (some would say secularization) of the American Jesuit colleges and universities, the logical positivist bias in conventional economic science, what one might call the marginalization of labor economics (Briefs' and Becker's specialization) within the discipline, or some other reason(s). Whatever the reason(s) for the decline in Catholic social economic thought and the role of the Jesuits within that scholarly tradition, today there are no American universities including Jesuit institutions which offer a doctorate in economics with a concentration in Catholic social economics.

At the present time, virtually none of the six persons included in our company of Jesuit economists would be identified by the typical economics student and, for all intents and purposes, their life work is entirely hidden from view in today's mainstream classroom. Worse yet, none of the professional

¹⁷ Becker is a recipient of the Thomas Divine Award for lifetime contributions to social economics and the social economy. He was featured as a "Distinguished Member of the Association for Social Economics" in the *Review of Social Economy*, April 1984.

work of the six would be recognized much less respected by the typical economics faculty even at Catholic institutions. The legacy of Pesch, Gundlach, von Nell-Breuning, Divine, Dempsey, Brown, Becker, Mulcahy, Solterer, Briefs (Goetz and son Henry), Mueller, Ederer, Waters, Danner, Worland, Gruenberg, and the others is being buried by an economics profession which accepts only mainstream thought as having any authenticity. In that sense, they share the same fate as their professional colleagues in economic history and history of economic thought.

A colleague on the economics faculty at a major American Catholic university recently recounted to the author his efforts urging the economics department to afford wider acceptance of intellectual perspectives outside the mainstream. His suggestions were roundly rejected by the faculty. Years before, another colleague at the same institution told the author that it would be a grueling if not impossible task for a person with a specialization and publication record in Catholic social economics to get tenured there.

One of the sad consequences of the dismantling of this tradition is that very few are left who are able to give Catholic social economics an articulate voice and apply it to the problems of the contemporary economic order. In the early 1980s the author received a first-draft copy of what would become the U.S. Bishops' pastoral letter on the economy -- *Economic Justice for All*. He was deeply concerned that the document was drafted in a way which indicated that the writers knew little about developments in Catholic social economics since the 1930s.¹⁸ Indeed, the draft read as if it had been written by a New Deal Democrat. The author urged his bishop to recommend assigning the overall responsibility for re-drafting the letter to either William Waters or Joseph Becker. The pastoral letter was improved significantly through revision, but never included the powerful insights of Catholic social economics as exemplified in the work of the six economists in our small company of Jesuits.

The future of Catholic social economics is not promising. Even so, three developments are encouraging. First, there is some concern among U.S. Catholic bishops that the Church's own social teaching is not known and understood "by ordinary Catholics on the job, around the home and in the community" [*Initiatives*, April 1998, pg. 4]. Indeed, a report prepared for the bishops' task force on higher education states that

¹⁸ Neither the first draft nor the published letter contained a single reference to work published in the *Review of Social Economy* the official journal of the old Catholic Economics Association which began publishing in 1944.

There is little systematic attention given to incorporating gospel values and Catholic social teaching into general education or into departmental majors.¹⁹

Second, in spite of their very small numbers, the Saint Louis Jesuits revolutionized sacred music in countless parishes in the United States. This great service to the Church originated in a university community which does not have a school of music! It is conceivable that something similar could take place in economics if some of the remaining American Jesuit economists including both priests and lay persons were centered in one place as they were for many years in the Institute for Social Order at Saint Louis University and later in the Jesuit Center for Social Studies at Georgetown University.

Third, John Paul II has articulated a magnificent vision of economic affairs driven by a different set of premises than the individualism which governs Western economies and contemporary economic thought. There is much work to be done in re-thinking economics with these different premises and in finding various ways to apply this thinking to current economic affairs and problems -- a worthy undertaking for any economics faculty free to explore beyond the boundaries of mainstream economic thought.

¹⁹ Quoted in *Initiatives*, May 1998, [pg. 1].

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