

## Alfred Marshall's Official Papers

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Groenewegen, Peter. *Official Papers of Alfred Marshall: A Supplement*, edited for the Royal Economic Society, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996. Pp.i-ix + 362. ISBN 0 521 551854. Hardback, \$105.

Since the centenary celebration of Alfred Marshall's *Principles* in 1990 scholars of his work have had a veritable feast of fresh material with Peter Groenewegen's magnificent biography of the 'soaring eagle' at the forefront. More recently the appearance of John Whitaker's edited volumes of Marshall's correspondence has added to the horde which also includes Groenewegen's *Reprints of Economic Classics* series and Groenewegen's substantial contributions to the *Marshall Studies Bulletin*. Now we have a felicitous by product of Groenewegen's biography of Marshall in this previously unpublished selection of Marshall's official papers.

An excellent general introduction by Groenewegen prepares the reader for the four reprinted "items" which stretch to over three hundred pages of text. The reasons for the omission of this material from the original *Official Papers* is a puzzle canvassed by the editor. Certainly space constraints and lack of knowledge of their existence by J.M. Keynes seem unlikely explanations. Even Mary Paley Marshall's implied suggestion that Marshall's claim to authorship of some material might be disputed by others is unconvincing. Those readers who have examined the Marshall papers and the accompanying markings and annotations would conclude that Mary, and Alfred before his death, were in no doubt that he was the rightful author of a large proportion of the material. A more plausible explanation is that some of this material may have been judged academically and politically sensitive.

One item was critical of the aging J.S. Nicholson, a former student of Marshall's, professor of political economy at Edinburgh for 45 years and a man who believed his career had been adversely affected by Marshall's less than enthusiastic support in academic matters. The material in a second item was associated with Marshall's work for the Royal Commission on Labour. Some of this material had been reviewed and rejected for further use (in publication) by Marshall in the closing years of his life. The precise reasons for this have not been established but rejection of the material mirrors Marshall's doubts and uncertainty about much of his writing on trade unions and industrial disputes. The third reprinted item relates to Marshall's famous "Memorandum on the Fiscal Policy of International Trade" which was reprinted by Keynes in its 1908 version. The version in the volume under review is dated to 1903. However its authorship is disputed by Groenewegen. Its inclusion is therefore all the more intriguing. The remaining item deals with evidence given by Marshall in an inquiry into higher education in regional Wales. Keynes probably judged this of insufficient interest to economists in 1925 in stark contrast to the interest now.

Groenewegen's general introduction provides a guide to the four reprinted items, the first of which deals with Marshall's evidence to a committee of inquiry into higher education in Wales and contiguous areas. The specific introduction to this and to the remaining items is an informative guide for the less well informed reader. Some of the major issues in dispute among historians of economic thought are mentioned, as are the major related and

contemporary publications. This first item is of less interest as an addition to our knowledge of Marshall's economic analysis yet it reveals much about the relatively neglected contribution he made to the higher education debate. As is well known, Marshall detested his administrative role in education at Bristol University College but it is precisely that experience which made him an eligible witness at the inquiry. The two most fascinating elements of the evidence relate to his views on the role of university examinations, and at that time, his still liberal approach to the participation of women in tertiary education both as students and as educators.

Item three is the longest item covering almost 200 pages of text and ranging over Marshall's direct contributions to the Royal Commission on Labour (1891-4), his examination of key witnesses and a fragment on strikes which analyses the role of trade unions. Once again the editorial introduction guides the reader through the material and provides some references to the relevant, modern history of thought literature. The editor has relied on the recollection of Mary Paley Marshall in selecting material "attributable to Marshall". There can be no doubt that Marshall made specific contributions to the deliberations and Final Report of the Commission on all eight topics which it covered. The only difficulty is the impact which editing and the search for balance and compromise have had on the tenor of the material. A comparison of the material attributed to Marshall at the beginning of the item and the material that he undoubtedly wrote which is reprinted at the end of item three reveals a marked disparity in style.

Marshall's examination of seven witnesses appearing before the Labour Commission sitting as a whole is reprinted with useful cross references to all the evidence before the Commission as well as to documents filed by the witnesses. The seven judicious selections cover a wide cross section of the British community including "working class leaders, socialist theorists, leading statisticians and social investigators and reformers" (p.89). An aspect of Marshall's character is revealed which previously has not been recognised or appreciated. Some readers will be surprised that it shows him as penetrating and incisive in his questioning without also being overbearing. Unfortunately, constrained by space considerations, Groenewegen was unable to reprint Marshall's questioning of witnesses, including working class ones, appearing before group B of the Commission. As he notes Beatrice Webb accused the Commission including Marshall, of bias and manipulation of some working class witnesses. Her opinion may well have been influenced by Sidney Webb's experience before the full Commission. There can be no doubt that Marshall adopted the patronising attitude of the expert in questioning Webb about his knowledge and interpretation of the classical economists. He appears to have driven Webb into a corner. Both the defensiveness and the superior attitude which Marshall reveals seem more consistent with his popular image.

Thanks to the research efforts by Groenewegen and the earlier ones by J.K. Whitaker the final reprinted item emerges as the most intriguing. On the basis of a range of analytical economic arguments, some timing and logistical issues as well as style and syntax Groenewegen is able to confirm what Whitaker first suggested. The document, "The Fiscal Problem", reprinted here as item 4 and attributed to Marshall (by J.C. Wood, 1982) as his 1903 version of the famous 1908 "Memorandum on the Fiscal Policy of International Trade" is probably a Treasury document. Groenewegen's decision to reprint this document will allow the reader to come to an independent view on its authorship. At the very least Marshall made an indirect contribution to the document which forms part of the background material on the acrimonious debate on tariff reform between 1901 and 1908.

Peter Groenewegen has served scholars of Marshallian economics very well indeed in reprinting this supplement to Marshall's official papers. His wide ranging efforts have made Marshall's writing more accessible to scholars of economic thought. A thoughtful

introduction to the material will stimulate further research. This is a well-presented hardback volume which every library should carry on its shelves despite its relatively high price.

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## References

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