

**WISCONSIN INSTITUTIONALISM:
JOHN R. COMMONS AND HIS STUDENTS**

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1. Introduction

Between the World Wars American institutionalism was well represented in the economics departments of two of the top four American universities: Columbia University and the University of Wisconsin. Columbia was by far the largest producer of PhDs in economics in the US at the time, while Wisconsin ranked well behind Columbia, but close to Chicago and Harvard (Froman 1942, Biddle 1998).¹ The University of Chicago had some institutionalist presence through to the mid 1920s, and the Robert Brookings Graduate School, during its brief life between 1923 and 1928, was strongly institutionalist in orientation, but in terms of the production of graduate students of an institutionalist orientation over the whole inter-war period, Columbia and Wisconsin dominate. In other work I have examined institutionalism at the Brookings Graduate School, Columbia, and Chicago (Rutherford 2003, 2004, 2006). But while there is no shortage of literature on John R. Commons's career and writings, there is relatively little written about the nature of Wisconsin economics more generally, or on the careers pursued by the graduate students produced by Commons at Wisconsin (but see Chasse 2004).

Despite the substantial position of institutionalism in the inter-war period, its place in American economics declined thereafter. As a part of the explanation of this decline it has been suggested that Wisconsin institutionalism failed to reproduce itself because graduates tended to have careers in government or in non-PhD granting institutions, and had lower fertility than graduates from other, non-institutionalist, schools (Biddle 1998). In my work on the Brookings Graduate School it became clear that most of those trained in economics there did opt for governmental careers (many in the New Deal Administration) and that very few produced PhD students of their own. In the case of Wisconsin, Jeff Biddle's investigation for students graduating between 1920 and 1946 found mixed evidence, but the information contained in Lampman (1993) allows for a more specific approach.

Lampman's book identifies those PhD students supervised by Commons and others of institutional persuasion, and also contains some information on the Wisconsin department and its

programs, and the later employment of graduates. This, combined with material from other published and archival sources, can provide a detailed picture of Wisconsin institutionalism in terms of the development of the department of economics, the faculty, the instructional program offered, the graduates produced, and their later careers.

2. The Evolution of a Department

The history of economics at the University of Wisconsin is usually traced back to the hiring of Richard T. Ely as the first full-time professor of economics in 1892. Ely's appointment placed him at the head of a new School of Economics, Political Science and History, a combination in line with the German model of Ely's own graduate education. Commerce courses were also offered within the school, a common arrangement then. At Wisconsin, Ely joined his former student Frederick Jackson Turner in history, and from Johns Hopkins he brought with him an assistant professor, William A. Scott, and two graduate students, David Kinley and Charles Bullock. Although Scott had been an Ely student his economics was of a marginalist type.

Ely's original school lasted until 1900, at which point political science formed a separate department, but still within the School of Economics and Political Science, while history formed a separate school altogether. A reorganization in 1903 resulted in separate departments of political economy, political science, and history all within a College of Letters and Science. Economics developed significantly in the early 1900s with the appointment of T. S. Adams and H. C. Taylor in 1902, John R. Commons in 1904, and E. A. Ross in 1906. Adams provided strong instruction in statistics, Taylor, himself a Wisconsin PhD, developed the field of agricultural economics, Commons took on major research efforts in the history of labor, while Ross provided stature to the instruction of sociology. Ross also brought to Wisconsin an admiration for the work of Thorstein Veblen (Dorfman 1973, 65), something Ely did not share (Ely 1932). Agricultural economics became a separate department within

the College of Agriculture in 1909, but students continued to be able to take courses in both departments. In history, Turner left Wisconsin for Harvard in 1910. Commerce remained within economics until 1927, and sociology until 1929 (Lampman 1993).

Through until the end of the first decade of the century Ely was undoubtedly the dominant personality in Wisconsin economics. The core courses in economic theory were taught largely by Ely and Scott, while Commons's teaching was confined to labor economics (Lampman 1993, 36-37). Although Ely had been significantly influenced by his exposure to German historical economics, Social Christianity, and English work on labor history by the Webbs, his teaching became highly eclectic, drawing on a variety of not always consistent sources. His course on the distribution of wealth utilized texts by John A. Hobson and J. B. Clark; Ely's attitude being that students could work through both and reach their own conclusions (Ely to Ross, December 16, 1902, Ely Papers Box 23, Folder 4).² Similarly, the second (1908) and later editions of Ely's textbook *Outlines of Economics* (with Allyn Young, T. S. Adams, and Max Lorenz as co-authors) included treatments of marginal utility and marginal productivity theory. Thus, although Ely was known for his empirical approach, notably his admonition to "look and see," and for his earlier reformist attitudes, he was not antagonistic to marginalist theory. It is generally agreed that he became increasingly conservative in his opinions, particularly after surviving the 1894 accusation that he was teaching anarchism (Rader 1966, 130-158). Ely and his department were quite within the mainstream of American economics, something that can be seen in the PhD students produced around the turn of the century among them David Kinley (1893), Charles Bullock (1895), Balthasar Meyer (1897), B. H. Hibbard (1902), Henry Taylor (1902), Allyn Young (1902), Lewis H. Haney (1906), and Otto Lorenz (1906).³ These students certainly absorbed some of Ely's approach and policy concerns, but none of them would play central roles in the institutionalist movement as it developed after 1918.

This is not to diminish Ely's contributions to the circumstances that created Wisconsin institutionalism. Ely, after all, pioneered the study of the American labor movement, taught both

Commons and Ross, and brought them to Wisconsin. He also developed (with Hibbard and Taylor) the field of agricultural economics, and contributed significantly to the study of public utilities, regulation, and to the study of the relation between law and economics. This last is worthy of emphasis as it is basic to Wisconsin institutionalism. Ely's interest in law and economics went back to his student days at Heidelberg, and connected with his interests in labor, public utility regulation, and land tenure. Ely had hoped to establish a school of jurisprudence at Wisconsin to combine the study of economics and law, but these plans did not bear fruit. Nevertheless, a Legal Philosophical Society did emerge at Wisconsin, a society that included Wisconsin's Chief Justice, two members of the Supreme Court, and faculty members from economics, philosophy and the law school (Ely to Roscoe Pound, June 9, 1915, Ely Papers, Box 51, Folder 4).⁴ Ely became an admirer of Roscoe Pound's sociological jurisprudence, and produced his own book *Property and Contract* in 1914. He wrote to Pound in 1916 to say that he hoped to make this new line of work his crowning life work (Ely to Roscoe Pound, April 3, 1916, Ely Papers, Box 53, Folder 6). Pound also pointed Ely to the work of W. N. Hohfeld at Yale, but it would be Commons who would later take up and use Hohfeld's legal terminology.⁵

Another feature of Wisconsin significant for the institutionalism that developed there was the close relationship between the university and the Wisconsin legislature summed up in the Wisconsin Idea (McCarthy 1912). This involved a joining of the progressive political ideals of politicians such as Robert M. La Follett Sr. with the university and its faculty in providing expertise, advice, and direct service through outreach and work on state boards and commissions. An important aspect of this was the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Library established in 1901 and headed by Charles McCarthy. McCarthy also taught in the political science department providing instruction in courses on the Theory and Practice of Legislation and Practical Bill Drafting (McCarthy 1912, 254). McCarthy was an admirer of Ely's earlier reformist economics, but Ely's involvement in Wisconsin's progressive legislative program was never large and was quickly overtaken by Commons's (Rader 1966, 175).

In fact, Ely's position within the department of economics began to be eclipsed by Commons only a few years after the latter's arrival, and it was Commons and his students, rather than Ely, who made Wisconsin an institutionalist department.⁶ There are a number of aspects to this. Commons was hired by Ely to work on a history of labor in the United States, a large project and one that was operated through the American Bureau of Industrial Research which Ely had founded and funded through private donations. The project became the center of a bitter dispute between Ely and Commons over the involvement of the Carnegie Institution (Commons Papers, Box 1; Folders 5 and 6). Carnegie had been funding a study of the history of labor conducted by Carroll D. Wright, but Wright died in 1909. Carnegie wanted Commons to take over the project and the issue became one of the relative roles, contributions, and credit to be given to Ely's Bureau and the Carnegie Institution. The first part of the project, *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, appeared in 1910-11, the title page reading "Prepared under the auspices of the American Bureau of Industrial Research, with the co-operation of the Carnegie Institution of Washington." The second part of the project, the *History of Labor in the United States* appeared in 1918 (volumes I and II) and 1935 (volumes III and IV). The work of the first two volumes was financed entirely by Carnegie, the last two by gifts from Henry W. Farnam⁷ and the University of Wisconsin. Commons also involved himself and some of his students in the Pittsburgh Survey funded by the Russell Sage Foundation.⁸ This level of external research funding was extremely unusual in economics before the 1920s, and although it was Ely who had initially sought external funding, it was Commons who benefitted more. The significant amounts of money given to these projects allowed Commons to involve large numbers of graduate students in his work to an extent that appears to have been unique in the American economics of the time (see Appendix II), and Carnegie involvement allowed Commons to assert his independence from Ely.

In addition, Commons's connections to the progressive politics of Wisconsin were closer than Ely's. These predated his arrival at Wisconsin, as Commons had been advising Robert M. La Follett

since 1902. Once in Wisconsin Commons became involved in drafting the Civil Service Law of 1906 and the Public Utility Act of 1907. He was also closely involved in the production of legislation on workmen's compensation, setting up the Wisconsin Industrial Commission (on which he also served), and with proposed legislation for unemployment compensation (the Huber bill of 1921; Commons 1921). Commons did not work alone on draft legislation, but with McCarthy and his staff, with law school faculty, with the American Association of Labor Legislation (founded by Ely and Commons among others in 1906), and with students.⁹ Commons and McCarthy were also key players in the work of the United States Industrial Commission between 1913 and 1915. Commons was one of the Commissioners, McCarthy was appointed as Research Director and oversaw the work of a staff including a large number of students many of the them Commons's (see Appendix II).¹⁰ Commons's close involvement of his students in what they later called action research (Raushenbush and Raushenbush 1979, 9) was an extremely appealing aspect of what he offered to students. In contrast, Ely was seen by many of Commons's students as having become conservative and a bit of an old fogey (Saposs Papers, Box 1, Folder 1).

Not surprisingly Commons quickly became the center for graduate student research in economics at Wisconsin. He established himself as one of the leading American labor economists, recognition coming with his election as President of the American Economics Association in 1917. It was Commons and his legion of students who transformed the department of economics. By 1918 Ely had moved out of teaching the core theory courses, although he was replaced in part by William Kiekhofer, one of Ely's students and of orthodox persuasion. On the other hand, Commons moved into teaching in the theory sequence in the form of his course Value and Valuation. This was a full year graduate course and covered Commons's work on law and economics and on reasonable value. A printed draft of Commons's manuscript Reasonable Value, later to become part of *Institutional Economics* (Commons 1934b), was produced in 1925 (Commons 1925) and used in his teaching and

widely circulated. Commons's student Selig Perlman began teaching in the department as an instructor in 1917 and was followed by Martin Glaeser, Don Lescohier, and Edwin Witte (as a lecturer from 1922 until 1933 when he replaced Commons). In 1926 and 1927 they were joined by Harold Groves, Paul Raushenbush, Elizabeth Brandeis, and Walter Morton. All of these individuals were graduate students of Commons's. Raushenbush never completed his doctoral work, and Glaeser went to Harvard for his doctorate before returning, but all the others were supervised or co-supervised by Commons. The faculty thus became preponderantly Wisconsin trained with a very high proportion being students of Commons's. Ely's teaching and research interest focused increasingly on land economics. In 1920 he founded the Institute for Research in Land and Public Utility Economics. In 1925, at the age of 71, and as the result of financial issues and disputes, he moved himself and his Institute to Northwestern.

Some other aspects of the University of Wisconsin relevant to the development of institutionalism should be mentioned. At Commons's urging the university established a School for Workers through the University Extension Division. Commons served as an advisor, and a number of his students would become associated with workers' education in Wisconsin and elsewhere. The university also hosted the Experimental College between 1927 and 1932. This college was headed by philosopher Alexander Meikeljohn who had been President of Amherst College until 1923. The program at Amherst was highly interdisciplinary and institutionalist in character, involving Walton Hamilton in economics, Clarence Ayres in economics and philosophy, and John Gaus in political science. Amherst students such as Morris Copeland, Paul Raushenbush, Edward Morehouse, and several others later became associated with the institutionalist movement. Raushenbush and Morehouse moved to Wisconsin to pursue doctoral level work (Rutherford 2003). John Gaus also moved to Wisconsin, becoming a very well known faculty member in political science and public administration. It must be said that Meikeljohn's Experimental College was always a highly controversial institution within the university, providing a two year program involving an intensive study of Greek civilization in the first year and of American civilization in the

second. Paul Rausenbush taught both at the college and in the economics department.¹¹ Hamilton moved from Amherst to head what he made a highly institutionalist program at the Robert Brookings Graduate School in Washington DC (Rutherford 2003). The School was closely linked to the Institute of Economics headed by Harold Moulton and with people such as Isador Lubin on staff. Hamilton had a central interest in law and economics, his students studied Commons's *Legal Foundations* (1924), and Commons visited the Institute of Economics and taught at the Brookings Graduate School when in Washington for the first six months of 1928 (while working on monetary stabilization and the Strong bill). Wisconsin students such as Walter Morton, Elsie Gluck and Paul Raushebush all spent at least a year at the School, and many others passed through (Rutherford 2003). Brookings also hosted Wisconsin Philosopher Max Otto for a part of the 1926/27 year. Otto was himself a Wisconsin philosophy PhD (1911) and taught there until 1947. He was an important representative of American pragmatism, and a close friend of John Dewey's.¹²

There were also good contacts between the National Bureau of Economic Research, headed by Wesley Mitchell, and Wisconsin economists. As President of the AEA Commons had been involved in some of the early discussions concerning the founding of the NBER, and he later served on the Board as the representative from Wisconsin. Wisconsin graduates such as Willford King and Harry Jerome¹³ served on the research staff of the Bureau, King working on national income estimates and Jerome on labor migration and business cycles. Jerome was a faculty member at Wisconsin and maintained strong instruction in statistics there until his death in 1938. Mitchell was very supportive of Commons's work, and it was Mitchell who first characterized Commons's *Legal Foundations* as a contribution to institutional economics (Mitchell 1924).

3. The Wisconsin Program in Economics

Lists of courses offered in economics for 1918/19 and 1928/29 are available in Lampman (1993,

38-42). A much more detailed listing with course descriptions and is available for the 1927/28 academic year in the Martin Glaeser papers (Box 2, Folder 22). As the full institutionalist complement of faculty Commons, Perlman, Raushenbush, Glaeser, Groves, Morton, Witte, Brandeis, Lescoghier, Jerome, as well as Ross in Sociology were all teaching in the 1927/28 or 1928/29 years, what follows will focus on the program as it existed in the late 1920s.

The descriptions of courses for the 1927/28 and 1928/29 academic years lists courses under eleven headings: economic theory, agricultural economics, accounting, business administration, finance, insurance, labor, land economics, public utilities, sociology, and statistics (Department of Economics, Description of Courses, Martin Glaeser papers, Box 2, Folder 22). Within the department of economics undergraduates could major in economics or sociology. Introductory economics at the undergraduate level was taught by Kiekhofer. Other undergraduate courses of note listed under economic theory included the Economics of Consumption (taught by Margaret Pryor, a 1927 Wisconsin PhD supervised by Kiekhofer), which focused on income distribution, selling methods, the conflict of interest between consumer and producer, the consumption process, standards of living, the role of government, and the consumer co-operative movement. Commons offered a course on Public Value (also open to graduate students) based mainly on a study of reported legal cases, involving a correlation of law, economics and psychology. In the 1928/29 year Paul Raushenbush taught an undergraduate course Economic Institutions, a course that would likely have reflected his instruction from Walton Hamilton at Amherst and Brookings (Rutherford 2003), and dealt with the social control of business (Raushenbush and Raushenbush 1979, 4). Specifically graduate level courses included a history of economics course offered by Scott, and the course, Value and Valuation, offered by Commons and described as an advanced research course in the correlation of law and economics, taking up different subjects and authors in different years, and covering in general the development of economic and legal theory as related to the modern phases of collective action. It was in this course that Commons developed and

taught his theories of law and economics, culminating in his theory of reasonable value. In addition, Martin Glaeser taught a graduate course called Economic Institutions, described as a consideration of the institutional approach to economics as contrasted with other types of approach, together with the study of economic institutions such as property and contract, with emphasis on their legal basis, and specific works illustrating the institutional method in treating economic problems. By the 1930s this course was including the study of Commons's *Institutional Economics* (1934b) and Berle and Means's *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* (1932). The graduate Seminary (seminar) in Economic Theory was taught by Kiekhofer and described in orthodox terms.

The section on agricultural economics included courses on rural life, farm accounting, agricultural marketing, farmer movements, and a graduate seminar in rural social organization. Hibbard taught advanced agricultural economics. The section on land economics included two courses also taught by Hibbard, *Outlines of Land Economics* and a graduate level course *Land Problems* (taught with George Wehrwein a 1922 Wisconsin PhD). The section on finance courses included courses on taxation and public finance taught by Harold Groves while Walter Morton offered *Risk and Risk Bearing* (the outline includes the business cycle as a factor of uncertainty and a critique of the price system), and *The Credit System* (a course on money and banking). Groves taught the graduate seminar in public finance, and his approach to public finance was explicitly institutionalist (see Groves 1964).

The section on labor is remarkable for the number of courses listed: a total of ten courses taught by Commons, Perlman, Witte, Brandeis, and Lescohier. The course descriptions also give an excellent feel for the Wisconsin style of labor economics. *The Evolution of Industrial Society* (Perlman) dealt with the principal theories of the evolution of industrial society from the manorial system to welfare capitalism. *Labor Problems* (Perlman), is described as dealing with the psychologies of unionism and of capitalism, scientific management and union job control, unions and employers' associations, and types of industrial government. *Labor Legislation* (Witte and Brandeis), focused on government

action in relation to labor, protective legislation and its constitutionality, collective bargaining and its legal status, and Wisconsin legislation and the work of the Wisconsin Industrial Commission. Brandeis used to get her students to attend hearings and legislative sessions and to follow the progress of bills dealing with labor issues (Raushenbush and Raushenbush 1979, 15). Wages and Prices (Lescohier), provided an analysis and interpretation of the trends of wages in America since 1840, theories of wages, wage differentials, minimum wage legislation, the family wage plan, technology and wages, and a critical examination of wage statistics and their sources. Capitalism and Socialism (Commons), gave a historical and interpretative view of the development of economic and political philosophies and of organized movements, including capitalistic, socialistic, communistic, anarchistic, and trade union thought and practice. Perlman's other two courses reflected the content of his *Theory of the Labor Movement* (1928): American Labor History contained discussion of the strength of private property, the lack of class consciousness, the inadequacy of the political instrument, intellectuals, anti-monopoly and job-conscious unionism, welfare capitalism, and left wing unionism; while Foreign Labor Movements covered British, German and Russian labor movements. Similarly, Lescohier taught two other courses based on his book *The Labor Market* (1919): Labor Management dealt with pathological conditions in modern industry, such as excessive labor turnover, restriction of output, strikes, industrial accident, industrial disease, and low wages, and possible remedies for these conditions, while his course titled The Labor Market discussed employment fluctuations, the facts and possible causes of unemployment, the methods of mitigating unemployment, the organization of the labor market, employment exchanges, and unemployment insurance plans. The graduate Seminary in Labor (Commons, Perlman and Lescohier) was designed for students working on their dissertations and was focused on American labor history from 1896 to date. It is difficult to imagine that any other university offered so much by way of instruction in labor economics.

The section on public utilities lists a number of courses given by Henry Trumbower (a 1924

Wisconsin PhD, supervised by Scott) on transportation and railway issues. The principal courses on public utility economics and utility regulation more generally were given by Glaeser. These courses covered basic public utility economics, the legal bases for utility regulation, regulation by special franchises, municipalities, state commissions, the federal regulation of railroads, valuation issues, taxation, and public ownership. A lot of this material is contained in Glaeser's *Outlines of Public Utility Economics* (1927). The graduate seminar was co-taught by Trumbower and Glaeser.

Sociology offered a vast number of courses, some twenty five in the 1927/28 course listing, indicating its imminent move to separate departmental status. The main instructors were Ross, John Lewis Gillin, Kimball Young, and Helen Clarke.¹⁴ Clarke taught the courses on social work and social administration. The course listings covered general sociology (based on Ross's *Principles of Sociology*, 1920), social problems, social origins (historical ethnology), social pathology (using Gillin's *Poverty and Dependency*, 1921), methods of case work, criminology and penology (using Gillin's *Criminology and Penology*, 1926), principles of social service, immigration and race problems (taught by Lescohier), history of social thought (taught by Young with an emphasis on Comte, Spencer, Bagehot, Tarde, Gumplovicz, Ratzenhofer, Simmel, Ward, Giddings, Cooley, and Ellwood), social agencies and legislation, the individual and social adjustment, cultural anthropology (including the family, clan, society, the institutions of property, and systems of jurisprudence and social control), and a large number of graduate seminars on social psychology, social institutions (containing a discussion of the theory of social evolution followed by a detailed examination of a specific social institution), correctional policies, degeneracy and society, poor law policy, cities, social mobility, the American family, and a research seminar.¹⁵

Finally, the section on statistics lists nine courses and also points to an additional three courses offered in mathematics and dealing with mathematical statistics. As mentioned above Wisconsin maintained considerable strength in statistics through until Jerome's death in 1938, and this is obvious in

the course offerings and descriptions. The introductory (primarily undergraduate) course in economic statistics covered the statistical data available and the techniques of analysis (averages, dispersion, sampling, probability, index numbers, trends, seasonal variation, business cycles, business forecasting, and correlation). There were a substantial number of courses for graduate students. These included Jerome's courses in Statistical Methods, Statistical Analysis of the Business Cycle, Advanced Statistical Technique, and the Seminar in Statistical Research, as well as a course titled Technique of Field Investigation and taught by Lescohier. Jerome's course on business cycles used Mitchell's *Business Cycles: The Problem and its Setting* (1927) as the primary reference, and it is quite clear that students would have been exposed to current NBER research on business cycles. Jerome's advanced course paid particular attention to index numbers, sampling, probability, the analysis of time series, and partial and multiple regression. The seminar was devoted to those wishing to work on a specific set of problems (in 1927/28 the primary issue related to changes in productivity and economic welfare),¹⁶ or those working on an applied thesis involving extensive quantitative work. Lescohier's course on field research (open to graduates and senior level undergraduates) is described as taking two or three field investigations actually contemplated and working out the detailed plans and methods for such investigations.

What these course listings show is the extent of the institutionalist point of view in Wisconsin economics. Not everyone on faculty or every course had an institutional orientation, but the overwhelming majority of the faculty and the courses they offered were clearly institutionalist. Even compared to Columbia, where there was a very substantial group of those of institutionalist persuasion (Rutherford 2004), Wisconsin economics seems more uniformly institutionalist in character. A good part of this, of course, came from the hiring of their own (and particularly Commons's) students. The many courses referencing economic and legal institutions, the extensive course offerings on labor problems and labor legislation, on public utilities and regulation, and on business cycles and quantitative methods, and the close connection of these courses with progressive social reform, all tie Wisconsin economics to the

institutional approach to economics as it was defined at the time: as empirical, focused on institutions, and concerned with social control (Hamilton 1919). Moreover, students commonly complemented the instruction available in economics with courses in history (especially during the time Turner was at Wisconsin), law, political science, and philosophy (particularly from Otto). In contrast, relatively little by the way of neoclassical theory was taught (except by Kiekhofer), and that not at a particularly rigorous level.¹⁷ Nothing at Wisconsin compared to the courses on theory given at Chicago by Jacob Viner, or the kind of instruction given at Harvard by Frank Taussig, Allyn Young, or, later, by Joseph Schumpeter. In this lack of strong instruction in neoclassical theory Wisconsin was similar to Columbia.

Wisconsin institutionalism did have some particular characteristics. The heavy emphasis on labor economics and issues stands out, as does the presence of courses on field research, and the influence of Commons's own type of legal/economic analysis. For example, Glaeser's text on public utility economics made significant use of Commons's work on law and economics, valuation issues, and his terminology of going concerns, transactions, and price and wage bargains (Glaeser 1927).

4. Commons's Students

Basic data on Commons's students and their later careers are contained in the three Appendices to this article. The list of students is limited to Commons's own PhD students and a few others; many more students than this took Commons's courses and became one of his Friday nighters. Commons supervised or co-supervised to completion forty-six PhD students during his Wisconsin career, over forty percent of the total PhD cohort over that period. Of these, thirty-one completed in 1926 or later. No one else on the faculty had anything close to Commons's numbers of PhD students. Ely has fourteen PhDs listed over the same period, Scott, Kiekhofer and Glaeser six each, and Ross, Perlman and Trumbower four each (Lampman 1993, 43).¹⁸

Commons's PhD students can be divided roughly into three groups. The first group are those

graduate students who worked with Commons and either graduated with PhD s, or went on elsewhere, prior to 1918. Virtually all of them wrote on labor economics. Commons graduated nine PhD students in this period, but a significant number moved on to other universities. The second group are those who completed doctorates from 1918 through to about 1925. This is a relatively small group of six students and they worked on labor economics, business cycles, and economic history. The last group are the substantial number of students who completed from 1926 through to Commons s retirement in 1933, a total of thirty-one students. These students worked on a greater variety of topics, including labor economics, law and economics, productivity changes, and issues relating to tariffs.

The first group includes Commons s first graduate student, Harry Millis, and those who made substantial contributions to the *Documentary History* or to the first two volumes of *History of Labor in the United States*: William Leiserson, David Saposs, Helen L. Sumner (Woodbury), E. B. Mittleman, H. E. Hoagland, John B. Andrews, and Selig Perlman. There were other students who either contributed to this research or who were involved with the US Commission on Industrial Relations such as Francis Bird, Frank Carlton, Ira Cross, Frederick Deibler, Ezeikiel Downey, John Fitch, Sumner Slichter, and Peter Speek. Among the better known of Commons s students from this period only Theresa McMahon was uninvolved with these projects, and she specialized in sociology.

One remarkable fact, however, is that of the primary contributors to the *Documentary History* or to the first two volumes of *History of Labor in the United States*, only Sumner, Andrews, and Perlman completed PhD s at Wisconsin. Leiserson moved to Columbia, Mittleman to Chicago, and Hoagland to Columbia. Ira Cross left Wisconsin after his MA and went to Stanford, and Slichter went to Chicago. Saposs stayed on at Wisconsin, working as Commons s closest assistant for a number of years before he was fired in 1917.¹⁹ He later took graduate work at Columbia, but did not complete a doctorate. This remarkable *diaspora* of the first generation of Commons s students begs explanation. According to Saposs, Ely became very jealous of Commons and blocked some of his students from graduating (Saposs

interview, Saposs papers, Box 1, Folder1). Saposs makes specific mention of Edward Mittleman and Sumner Slichter, but it is unclear how many students left Wisconsin for this reason, or this reason alone. Slichter's father became Dean of Graduate Studies at Wisconsin, which may also have played a role in his son's move to Chicago. Leiserson moved to Columbia on the basis of financial offers and opportunities Wisconsin could not match, despite Commons's and T. S. Adams's desire to retain him (Eisner 1967, 11-12). All the same, there may be something in Saposs's claim. Ely left Wisconsin in 1925 and the number of students Commons graduated from then on took a dramatic upward jump. There seems to have been no later movement of key Commons students to other institutions. Martin Glaeser chose to complete his PhD at Harvard rather than Wisconsin, but this was due to a temporary disaffection caused by disputes over America's involvement in World War I, and his departure was short lived.²⁰

The later careers and contributions of a number of these students are worth mentioning briefly (Appendix III provides some details on others). Harry Millis was Commons's first graduate student at Indiana, and went on to complete a PhD at Chicago and was a faculty member at Stanford between 1903 and 1912, before moving back to Chicago in 1916. Millis became a well known figure in labor and industrial relations working both as an academic and as a mediator. He, along with James Field, Leon C. Marshall, and J. M. Clark provided an institutionalist component to the Chicago faculty of the 1920s (Rutherford, 2006). Between 1934 and 1935 and again between 1940 and 1945 Millis was a member of the National Labor Relations Board, the latter period as Chairman. Leiserson was also a member of the NLRB between 1939 and 1943 and had much to do with Millis's appointment (Eisner 1967). Commons regarded them as "two of my best boys" (Commons to Leiserson November 15, 1940, Leiserson Papers, Box 9).

Commons's first Wisconsin PhD's graduated in 1908: John B. Andrews and Helen Sumner Woodbury. Andrews became the central figure in the American Association for Labor Legislation, the most significant organization lobbying for labor legislation reform between 1910 and World War II

(Chasse 1991; 1994). The AALL worked to promote improved working conditions, workplace health and safety legislation, unemployment compensation, national health insurance, and social security. Helen Sumner Woodbury co-authored *Labor Problems* (1905) with T. S. Adams, a widely used textbook, and went on to write on women's suffrage, the history of women in industry, and on industrial courts in Europe. In 1913 she joined the Children's Bureau becoming assistant chief, and then chief investigator, and wrote extensively on child labor and child labor legislation (Lobdell 2000).

Others who completed their PhDs in this first period include Frederick Deibler, Theresa McMahon, Ezekiel Downey, and Selig Perlman. Deibler, McMahon, and Perlman all had academic careers. Deibler chaired the Department of economics at Northwestern from 1916 until 1942 and worked in labor economics and mediation. Theresa McMahon's PhD was in sociology. She worked with Ross as well as Commons, and her thesis was published as *Women and Economic Evolution* (1912). She went on to a career at the University of Washington working on consumption and standards of living (McMahon 1925). She championed minimum wage legislation and the eight hour day for women (Dimand 2000). One of her best students, Ewan Clague, she helped to go to Wisconsin for his doctoral work. After her retirement in 1937, Witte recruited her to the Advisory Board for Social Security, where she was a supporter of Witte's positions. Perlman stayed at Wisconsin becoming a leading labor economist and an authority on both American and European labor movements. His classic work *A Theory of the Labor Movement* appeared in 1928. Perlman was also closely involved with Wisconsin's School for Workers, but not, like most of his colleagues, with New Deal legislation (Witte 1960). Downey's career took him into state government. He had been significantly influenced by Thorstein Veblen and Robert Hoxie, and was the author of 'The Futility of Marginal Utility' (1910) a paper of Veblenian orientation. His career, however, concentrated on workplace accident and compensation issues, primarily for the Insurance Commission of Pennsylvania, and he became one of the leading experts in this field until his early death in 1922 (see Downey 1924).

The most notable of those who moved away from Wisconsin include Ira Cross, William Leiserson, David Saposs, and Sumner Slichter. Cross went to Stanford for his doctorate and coincided with Thorstein Veblen, Harry Millis and Allyn Young. He accepted a call to Berkeley in 1914, becoming a full professor and chair of the department in 1919. His *History of the Labor Movement of California* appeared in 1935, and he wrote widely on labor issues and was closely involved in employment management, labor relations, and labor education. His own students included labor economists such as Paul Taylor (a Wisconsin BA) and Clark Kerr (Cross, taped interview). Leiserson moved to Columbia for his doctorate, but remained in very close contact with Wisconsin. He worked briefly for Wisconsin's Industrial Commission, as assistant director for research under McCarthy for the US Commission on Industrial Relations, and held faculty positions at the University of Toledo and then at Antioch College (1926-1933). While at Antioch he chaired the Ohio Commission on Unemployment Insurance and developed the Ohio Plan for unemployment compensation, that, ironically, became the major competitor to the Wisconsin Plan. Leiserson's plan was based on insurance against risk principles, while the Wisconsin approach emphasized the prevention of unemployment through individual employer accounts and rating. His major contributions came through his work in labor mediation, as Chairman of the Labor Adjustment Board for the Rochester clothing industry (1919-1926), the National Labor Board (1933-34), National Mediation Board (1934-1939 and 1943-1944), and the National Labor Relations Board (1939-1943). After leaving Commons's employ, David Saposs spent several years working on a number of investigations, including the controversial investigation of the 1919 steel strike funded by the Inter-Church World Movement. He taught at Brookwood Labor College from 1922 until 1933 and took graduate courses in economics and labor history at Columbia between 1924 and 1926. His research focused on radical labor movements and the labor movement in France (Saposs 1926; 1931). Between 1935 and 1940 he served as chief economist and head of the research division of the NLRB. He was accused of being a communist and his bureau was abolished in 1940. He then worked in a variety of

private and governmental research positions. Slichter completed his PhD at Chicago in 1918 and went on to a successful academic career in labor economics and industrial relations at Cornell (where he was a colleague of Morris Copeland) and Harvard (where Alvin Hansen would join him in 1937). Slichter was a contributor to the Tugwell volume *The Trend of Modern Economics* (1924) and initially a strong supporter of increased social control and intervention in the economy (Slichter 1931). He was also an early (pre-Keynesian) advocate of deficit spending by government during recessions, but never an adherent of Hansen's stagnation thesis (Leeson 1997).

The best known among the second group of students are Alvin Hansen, Don Lescohier, and Calvin Hoover. Martin Glaeser might also be included here as although his PhD was from Harvard he was present in Wisconsin both before and after his graduation in 1925. All of these individuals had academic careers, Hansen at Minnesota and then Harvard, Lescohier and Glaser at Wisconsin, and Hoover at Duke. During this period Commons was working on monetary economics and stabilization issues and had students working on cycles. The best known of these was Alvin Hansen, his thesis dealing with *Cycles of Prosperity and Depression, 1902-1908*. His further research on unemployment and cycle theories resulted in his moving away from his teachers' opinions, resulting in his widely respected book *Business Cycle Theory* (1927). Hansen's later development of his stagnationist position, and his adoption of Keynesian ideas have been too well documented to repeat here (Barber 1987; Mehrling 1997; Lesson 1997), but what is worth emphasizing is that his version of Keynesian economics was closely joined to a Wisconsin style of social reform program. For Hansen, a full employment program went hand in hand with a comprehensive system of social security, adequate public education including adult education and research, adequate public health facilities and services, adequate provision of housing including public housing, urban redevelopment and renewal, river valley development along the lines of the TVA, conservation of agricultural and forest resources, and transportation facilities (A Full Employment Program, Hansen Papers, Research Notes, Box 2).

Hansen was also closely involved in the discussions surrounding unemployment compensation schemes and the social security system (Hansen and Murray 1933), as well as with the development of the Employment Act of 1946.²¹

Lescohier taught labor economics at Wisconsin for many years, his best known work being *The Labor Market* (1919), a book that in many ways was the American equivalent of William Beveridge's *Unemployment: A Problem of Industry* (1909), with its emphasis on types and causes of unemployment and idleness, labor turnover, inefficiencies in the labor market, and employment exchanges. Hoover's PhD thesis was on a topic in institutional economic history: Capital and Contract in Genoa in the Twelfth Century. Hoover spent his career at Duke University undertaking research on the economies of Europe and Soviet Russia. In 1933 he became an Advisor to the Department of Agriculture, and after World War II he was involved in the implementation of the Marshall Plan. Glaeser focused on public utility economics. He recalls being welcomed at Harvard and that Wisconsin was held in high regard there. He worked most closely with William Z. Ripley (Ripley and Commons had worked together on the Pittsburgh plus pricing case), but took Roscoe Pound's graduate course on jurisprudence (Glaeser Richard T. Ely Centennial 1854-1954, Glaeser Papers, Box 2, Folder 28). Glaeser also took Commons's course on Value and Valuation on more than one occasion, and he imported Commons's concepts into his work on public utility economics (Glaeser 1927). Glaeser was much involved with the work of the TVA during the New Deal.

As mentioned above the number of students Commons graduated after 1925 took a sharp upward leap. Between 1926 and 1933 Commons graduated thirty one PhD students, far too many to discuss in detail. Basic information is given on these students in the Appendices, but some further comment is warranted on the subset who were most closely involved in unemployment compensation and social security: Harold Groves, Elizabeth Brandeis, Paul Rausenbush, E. E. Witte, and Arthur Altmeyer. Brief mention will also be made of Edward Morehouse, and Anna Mae Campbell Davis.

Harold Groves, Elizabeth Brandeis, and Paul Raushenbush were together the prime movers in the drafting and ultimate passage of the Wisconsin unemployment compensation law of 1932 (the Groves Act). Groves and Brandeis both wrote their theses on topics in labor economics; Raushenbush had a thesis under preparation but never completed it. Groves and Brandeis had academic careers at the University of Wisconsin,²² while Raushenbush moved into the administration of Wisconsin's unemployment compensation system. Groves was elected a member of the Wisconsin legislature in 1930, and with the encouragement of Philip LaFollette, introduced a preliminary unemployment compensation bill in 1931, drafted with the help of Edwin Witte. A revised version drafted by Groves, Brandeis, and Raushenbush (with help from Arthur Altmeyer) was presented in 1932. The main features of the bill were the establishment of individual employer reserves (a change from the earlier Huber bill, and Groves's own innovation), contributed to by employers only, and experience rating. Each firm (plant) was to be responsible for its own unemployed. This bill passed, becoming the first unemployment compensation law in the United States. Paul Raushenbush was appointed as head of the Unemployment Division of the Wisconsin Industrial Commission to administer the law in 1934 (taking over from E. E. Witte who had temporarily occupied the position).²³

Rausenbush was also closely involved in the drafting of the 1934 Wagner-Lewis bill designed to encourage the passage of state unemployment compensation laws, and which contained a tax offset provision suggested by Justice Brandeis (Raushenbush and Raushenbush 1979, 193-177). Action on this bill was suspended in 1934 in favor of work on a broader social security bill. Here again Raushenbush was called on by Altmeyer to help draft alternative model unemployment compensation bills for the states (Raushenbush and Raushenbush 1979, 41), but it was Witte who, in 1934, was placed in charge of the overall effort as executive director and secretary of the Committee on Economic Security.²⁴

Witte was a Wisconsin undergraduate and graduate student at the same time as David Saposs and knew all of those involved in Commons's early work on labor history. As an undergraduate Witte had

majored in history, but was then attracted to Commons's teaching in labor economics. He spent some years as a graduate student of Commons's before working for the Wisconsin Industrial Commission, the US Commission on Industrial Relations, and then, from 1922 as Chief of the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Library, succeeding Charles McCarthy. Witte's work for the Industrial Commission involved him with industrial accident compensation issues, and his work for the Reference Library with many issues surrounding proposed legislation concerning such things as minimum wages, pensions, and unemployment insurance. His own research over this time concerned the use of court injunctions in labor disputes, the topic of his 1927 PhD thesis.²⁵ Only shortly thereafter Witte became part of a group with Felix Frankfurter and Herman Oliphant (of Harvard and Columbia Law Schools respectively) drafting a bill to limit the use of "yellow dog" contracts and court injunctions, a bill that was passed in 1932 as the Norris-LaGuardia Act. Witte also lectured at Wisconsin in economics, political science, sociology, and law, but only became a regular faculty member in the department of economics in 1933, replacing Commons on his retirement. His most significant contribution to the Wisconsin teaching program was his course on *The Role of Government in the Economy* (Samuels 1967; 2004; Witte 1957).

Witte is often seen as the "father" of the Social Security Act passed in 1935 (Cohen 1960), and there is no doubt that his tenacity, work capacity, close concern with the politically possible, and ability to keep those with differing views focused on the main task, were vital to the ultimate success of the act (Schlabach 1969; Witte 1937). Other Wisconsin graduates were also very much involved in the formulation, passage, and administration of the Social Security Act, notably Arthur Altmeyer, and Witte's own student Wilbur Cohen. Altmeyer's 1931 PhD was a case study of the Wisconsin Industrial Commission. Between 1922 and 1933 he was secretary of the Wisconsin Industrial Commission. In 1933 he became Chief of the compliance division of the NRA, then Second Assistant Secretary of Labor, and then Chairman of the Technical Board of the Committee on Economic Security. After the passage of the Social Security Act he worked for many years as a member, and then Chairman, of the Social

Security Board (Altmeyer 1966). Several other Commons students also worked on Social Security, including Ewan Clague, who became Commission of Labor Statistics in 1946.

Outside of the area of unemployment insurance and social security, and more concerned with the academic aspects of Commons's work on law and economics, two students stand out: Edward Morehouse and Anna Mae Campbell Davis. As things transpired neither of these students went on to long term academic careers. Campbell Davis completed her PhD in 1927 on the subject of Law and Economics in the Commodity Transaction dealing with marketing practices and judicial decisions. Before completing her dissertation she was able to attend the jurisprudence seminar given by noted legal realist W. W. Cook at Johns Hopkins (Campbell to Commons, October 31, 1926, Commons Papers, Box 3, Folder 6). Morehouse wrote his thesis on the rule making in the Rochester clothing industry during the time that Leiserson served as Chairman of the Labor Adjustment Board. Parts of this research were published (Morehouse 1923; Commons and Morehouse 1927) in articles that added a great deal of meat to Commons's idea of the rule making function of quasi-judicial bodies and of the manner in which rules and customs established within an industry are taken over and approved. Morehouse, Commons, and Karl Llewellyn at Yale Law School also carried on a significant correspondence concerning Commons's legal economic framework, particularly the concept of custom (Commons Papers, Box 3, Folder 5; Morehouse Papers, Box 1, Folder 2).

Morehouse moved with Ely to Northwestern in 1925,²⁶ where he worked as a research associate in Ely's Institute, as an associate professor, and editor of *Journal of Land and Public Utility Economics*. His research focused increasingly on public utilities, but he also taught a course called Economic Institutions using Commons's *Legal Foundations* and *Reasonable Value*. In about 1927, he and Campbell Davis produced numerous outlines for a book of case materials for the teaching of volitional economics, and the two of them collected and briefed all of the cases mentioned in *Legal Foundations* and *Reasonable Value*, as well as additional material. This case book, as far as I can discover, was

never finally produced or published. The outlines show lists of cases organized in chapters headed: Changes in the Meaning of Words, with sections on property, liberty, and physical, economic and moral power; Going Concerns; The Transaction; The Rent Bargain; The Price Bargain; The Credit Bargain; The Wage Bargain, including sections on statutory rules, administrative rules, and extra-judicial rules of wage bargains; The Tax Bargain; and Stabilization, including sections on public purpose, fair and unfair competition, discrimination and extortion, and reasonable value (Morehouse Papers, Materials for the Study and Teaching of Volitional Economics, December 1927, Box 1, Folder 2).

In 1931 Ely left the Institute and a year later moved to New York, and the Institute ceased operation in 1932. In 1931 there were discussions about Morehouse accepting a position in Commerce at the University of Wisconsin, but there was opposition, and he accepted the position of Chief Economist and Director of the rates and research department of the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin, and moved permanently out of the academic world. Davis received a post-doctoral award from the SSRC in 1932 for a year of study in England working on the common law courts and the history of capitalism in England prior to 1700. She did not continue in an academic career, and from 1933 onward she practiced law in Madison, concentrating on labor law and civil liberties cases.

5. What Happened to Wisconsin Institutionalism?

Examining the list of Commons's student and their careers makes one realize that there cannot have been very many, if any, other professors of economics in the US over the period Commons was at Wisconsin who produced as many graduate students, or whose students had such a marked impact on government legislation and policy. In this sense Commons and his students were extremely successful. What, then, happened to Wisconsin institutionalism, and why did its particular type of economics and economic education suffer a decline in the years that followed?

This paper opened with the issue of the decline in the position of institutionalism and the

hypothesis of a relative lack of fecundity among Wisconsin graduates, resulting in a failure to reproduce that kind of economics. It is certainly true that Wisconsin graduates contributed to matters of policy to a remarkable extent, and that Commons encouraged his students to obtain practical experience, but as far as the period through to Commons's retirement in 1933 is concerned, the lists in Appendices I and III demonstrate both that Commons had a large number of graduate students and that many of his students *did* go on to academic careers. Many did supervise PhD students and some on the same order of magnitude as Commons. Lampman (1993) lists Witte with fifty-four PhD students completed through 1960, Groves with forty-eight, Perlman with forty-six, Glaeser with twenty-seven, and Morton with twenty-six. The careers of Commons's students (and the list includes not only those at Wisconsin but also Millis, Cross, Hoover, Slichter, and Hansen) are, in that respect, quite different from those of the economics graduates from the Brookings Graduate School, and probably compare with the graduates from the other major PhD institutions. On the other hand, it is clear that among the major PhD institutions Wisconsin graduates were hired heavily by Wisconsin itself (and to a lesser extent Harvard, Berkeley, and Northwestern). This pattern of hiring one's own was not so uncommon in the inter-war period, but it may indicate that Wisconsin graduates were not so well regarded in the East, except perhaps at Harvard where the links with Wisconsin went back to Charles Bullock and Allyn Young. Wisconsin's habit of hiring its own did fall out of favor in later years, and university administrators fought against it from about the mid-1930s onwards.

In looking at the employment histories in Appendix III, it is also important to remember that after about 1933 the effect of the Depression on university finances was such as to make academic positions increasingly difficult to find for the graduates of any university, and university hiring in general declined and did not really boom again until after the end of World War II. At the same time the New Deal and the growth of governmental programs opened up alternative job opportunities for economics graduates, but again quite generally. Given the nature of the Wisconsin training it is unsurprising that Wisconsin

graduates had a very major presence in the Department of Labor and in the Social Security Administration. The extent of this involvement was very substantial, but it included those with academic jobs as well as those without. The effect of the depression on the availability of academic positions could have been a factor in some individuals not becoming or remaining academics, but there is no real evidence that Wisconsin graduates were particularly unusual in their career patterns, at least up to this point in time. The real issue is not so much what happened to Commons's students, but what happened to the students of his students, who graduated into an academic world in which Wisconsin's academic ranking had fallen significantly (Biddle 1998, 120), and economics departments in general were less amenable to institutionalism. It is much harder to trace the careers of these students, but scanning the list proved in Lampman, one suspects that relatively few of them were as clearly institutionalist in orientation as those of the previous generation, or produced graduate students in a manner similar to Commons, Witte, Perlman, Groves or Glaeser. This then points to the ultimate lack of fecundity of Wisconsin style institutional economics as itself a result of other causal factors, most obviously the shifts taking place within both the Wisconsin department and the profession at large.

Institutionalism at Wisconsin was very much a matter of the presence on the faculty of John R. Commons and a good number of his former students. Commons provided not merely instruction in labor economics, but taught his central ideas concerning law and economics in the theory sequence in the form of his course on Value and Valuation, and also provided a focus for student identity in his Friday nights. These were important elements, and once Commons retired there was nothing of quite the same nature to replace them. Witte did teach his courses on Government and Business and the Role of Government in the Economy (at the graduate level), which to some extent substituted, but it was offered as a course in the area of Economic History and Institutions and not as a part of the theory sequence of courses. The Friday night tradition also ended with Commons. Institutionalism at Wisconsin thus lost its central personality, much of its theoretical core, and its social center. Witte's definition of institutional

economics in 1954 as little more than a practical problems approach did not help the status of Wisconsin's institutional economics in the profession (Witte 1954,133).

Wisconsin also did very little hiring from 1933 until after the end of World War II. The Depression, as mentioned above had a strongly negative effect on the availability of academic positions quite generally, but Wisconsin's financial position was especially difficult. Wisconsin salaries became quite uncompetitive, and Wisconsin emerged from the War years with a much reduced ranking in the academic world. Harry Jerome was not replaced on his death in 1938, and the teaching of statistics passed to faculty in Commerce. There were efforts to overcome this problem made by Harold Groves, which resulted in the Friedman affair in 1941.²⁷ James Early (a Walter Morton student) was hired in 1937 and Paul Ellsworth (from Harvard) in 1943, but it was not until 1947 that a major renewal of faculty took place with the influx of Theodore Morgan (Harvard), Eugene Rotwein (Chicago), Edwin Young (Wisconsin, supervised by Perlman), and Martin Bronfenbrenner (Chicago).²⁸ The majority of these hires were from outside Wisconsin and these and later hires began the shift of the Department away from its previous institutionalist focus. Both Early and Morgan were of Keynesian orientation, and one can see in the lists of course offerings provided by Lampman for 1938 and 1948 the institutionalist elements tending to become confined to specific field areas, particularly labor and public utilities, while more standard microeconomics and Keynesian macroeconomics come to make up the theory sequence.

In terms of other universities that absorbed something of a Commons Wisconsin influence one can point to Northwestern (Deibler and Morehouse), Berkeley (Cross and Taylor), and Harvard (Hansen and Slichter). It is worth repeating that Hansen style Keynesianism contained a large element of Wisconsin progressivism. Even Chicago had some links to Commons, primarily through Harry Millis, but also later through Theodore Schultz. It would not be correct to label Schultz an institutionalist, but he held Commons in high regard, had a broad view of economics, and was instrumental in hiring Margaret Reid to Chicago (who clearly was institutionalist in approach). But none of these places

became centers for institutionalism in the sense that Wisconsin was, so such institutionalist elements as there were became admixed with others of a more orthodox nature. This can be seen in the next generation of so called neo-institutionalist labor economists: John Dunlop, Clark Kerr, Lloyd Reynolds, and Richard Lester. Of these, three obtained their PhDs from Berkeley or Harvard where they would have been exposed to Wisconsin style labor economics,²⁹ but this was combined with more neoclassical elements, and labor economics gradually became less institutionalist in character (Boyer and Smith 2001; Kaufman 2004). This attenuation of institutionalist thinking in the development of the post 1945 mainstream can also be seen in the case of Wisconsin work on business cycles, cyclical unemployment, and public finance. This institutionalist work was partly replaced by, and partly absorbed into, the Keynesian thinking emanating from Harvard.

Institutionalist work on public utilities survived both at Wisconsin and in government, notably at the hands of Martin Glaeser, Ray Penn, and their students. But even here there was a gradual loss of the Commons type of legal/economic terminology used by Glaeser. Further work in the Commons tradition in law and economics was undermined both by the loss of Morehouse and Davis to the academic world, and by the more general decline of the legal realist movement in law. Moreover, Commons did not communicate his system of thinking very clearly, and interest in the more analytical aspects of Commons's work was only ever maintained by a few.³⁰

A different factor at work relates to the particular type of economics taught at Wisconsin. As is obvious from the course materials discussed above, Wisconsin economics had an extremely heavy emphasis on labor law, arbitration and mediation, and on issues of industrial accident insurance and unemployment compensation. This material, in terms of teaching, research, and involvement in matters of public policy and administration, however, began to migrate from economics departments into newly established schools of public administration and industrial relations (Kaufman 1993; 2003). Harvard's Littauer School of Public Administration was founded in 1936, and the first school of industrial relations

at Cornell in 1945. In 1946 and 1947 Witte himself became involved in the organization of the Industrial Relations Research Association, and became its first president (Schlabach 1969, 218).³¹

Through the late 1930s and 1940s the discipline of economics changed along several dimensions. It must be said that Wisconsin institutionalism represented a particular style of economics, not just related to institutionalism, but also specifically tied to the Wisconsin tradition of progressivism, to an especially heavy emphasis on labor economics and labor legislation, and the unique influence of John R. Commons. It also has to be admitted that only a small number of students became at ease with Commons's legal/economic analysis, and most did focus on applied areas of work. This left Wisconsin institutionalism vulnerable to new developments, including the formation of new specializations in professional training in policy related areas such as industrial relations and public administration, the actual passing of much of the labor legislation, unemployment compensation, and social security schemes that provided much of the motivation for Wisconsin progressivism, the development of somewhat improved neoclassical treatments of imperfect output and factor markets, and the arrival of Keynesian economics. Institutionalists remained critical of neoclassical theory, and many also expressed concern over the more mechanistic types of Keynesian analysis, but institutionalism at Wisconsin was being confronted not only by alternative approaches within economic theory, but also by new issues and problems, new political contexts, and new models of professional education and training that ultimately absorbed many of the key components of the Wisconsin institutionalist tradition.

Notes

1. The rankings vary a bit as between numbers of PhD candidates, numbers of PhDs awarded, and on the definition of an economics PhD. It is hard to rank Brookings as it only existed between 1923 and 1928 and produced PhDs both in economics and political science. Nevertheless, during its life Brookings produced a total of sixty-six PhDs, a significant rate of production.
2. John A. Hobson visited the US in 1902/03 and taught at Wisconsin between January and April 1903.
3. Kinley became President of the University of Illinois; Bullock a professor in economics at Harvard; Meyer a member of the economics department at Wisconsin until 1910, and then a member of the Interstate Commerce Commission; Taylor a professor of agricultural economics and the first Chair of that department at Wisconsin, then moving to the US Department of Agriculture where he established the US Bureau of Agricultural Economics; Hibbard a professor of agricultural economics at Wisconsin between 1914 and 1940, and Chair of agricultural economics; Young a very widely respected professor of economics at (among other places) Stanford, Cornell, Harvard, and the LSE; Haney a historian of economics and business organization at University of Texas and later at New York University; Lorenz a statistician for the Interstate Commerce Commission and the inventor of the Lorenz curve.
4. A department of law was established at Wisconsin in 1848. This became the College of Law in 1889 and the Law School in 1909. Wisconsin became known for its law in action approach to legal education. Walter W. Cook, who would later become a well known legal realist at Columbia and Johns Hopkins, was at Wisconsin Law School from 1906-1910. Another of the realist group, William Underhill Moore was also at Wisconsin for a brief time, before moving to Chicago.
5. There were close connections between the realist movement in law and institutional economics which involved not only Commons and Wisconsin, but Walton Hamilton, and Robert Hale at Columbia who both moved from economics to law. Some of this is discussed in Rutherford (2003; 2004; and 2005). Karl Llewellyn was another of the realists, first at Yale and then Columbia. Commons was invited to teach at Yale Law School for a summer term in 1926 (Commons to Llewellyn, November 15, 1925, Commons Papers, Box 13, Folder1). Walton Hamilton was hired to Yale Law School in 1928.
6. This despite Commons's health and family problems (Commons 1934a).
7. Henry Farnham of Yale had been the lead figure in the Carnegie Institution's Department of Economics and Sociology. This department was discontinued in 1916 but the balance of its appropriations was transferred to those involved; at first simply named the group of collaborators. An additional gift was made to this group at some point prior to the publication of the first volume of the *History*, and the group was renamed the Board of Research Associates in American Economic History.
8. These students were William Leiserson and John A. Fitch. Fitch was the author of the very well known book *The Steel Workers* (1910).
9. Paul Raushenbush reports that although Commons had key ideas concerning legislation he was not a particularly good legislative draftsman (Raushenbush and Raushenbush 1979, 69). People such as Commons, Edwin Witte, Harold Groves, Paul Raushenbush, Elizabeth Brandeis Raushenbush, and John Andrews were all involved with the actual drafting of legislation.

10. In addition to the Commons students listed in Appendix II, McCarthy also employed many other young labor economists. Lists of investigators and research work can be found in the Charles McCarthy Papers Box 8, Folder 6, and Box 24, Folder 13). McCarthy and Frank Walsh, who Chaired the Commission, had a serious falling out over issues of budget and Walsh's desire to focus on hearings involving John D. Rockefeller rather than research. Walsh dismissed McCarthy, and Leiserson resigned. Commons and commissioner Mrs. B. J. Harriman wrote a dissenting report (Harter 1962, 131-159).

11. Clarence Ayres and Morris Copeland visited Meikeljohn at Wisconsin and taught at the College during 1928 and 1929, but their contacts with the economics department do not seem to have been extensive. At this time Ayres was a philosopher not an economist. Copeland did have contact with Commons both at Brookings and Wisconsin.

12. In 1912 Attempts were made to have Otto dismissed from Wisconsin as an enemy of religion. Otto was a unitarian, and concerned to provide a non-theistic basis for moral action. Otto was supported by university President Van Hise. Later attacks on Otto were mounted in 1932. Parsons makes a number of interesting comments that indicate the extent to which Dewey's philosophy was taught by Otto and others at Wisconsin (Parsons interview 1976).

13. King received his PhD in 1912, the Lampman book does not provide information on his thesis supervisor. Jerome was a 1918 Wisconsin PhD, supervised by Ely.

14. John Gillin received his PhD from Columbia in 1906 and was recruited to Wisconsin by Ross who had been one of his teachers. Best known for his work on criminology he became President of the American Sociological Society in 1926. Kimball Young received his PhD in 1921 from Stanford and became a well known social psychologist. He left Wisconsin in 1940 and became President of the American Sociological Society in 1943. Helen Clarke earned a BA from Smith and an MA from Chicago in 1926.

15. As might be expected from the course titles there is a certain amount of material dealing with social biology, eugenics, degeneracy as related to biological factors, and problems of race and racial assimilation. This type of material was a standard part of sociology at the time. Ross's work contained such material, and Ross and Commons both favored the immigration restriction acts of the early 1920s which were directed against Southern and Eastern European immigration. Ross's and Commons's work on immigration, and Kimball Young's work generally, is full of racial and ethnic stereotyping.

16. For the importance of this work on labor productivity and its link to the debate over technological unemployment, which involved people such as Jerome, Willford King, Paul Douglas, E. E. Day, Woodlief Thomas, Rexford Tugwell, Slichter and Hansen, see Woirol (forthcoming).

17. Kiekhofer apparently believed that graduate theory instruction should involve going back over an introductory text book, such as his own, with more attention to the footnotes (see Martin Bronfenbrenner 1993, 134-135).

18. In terms of modern PhD programs at leading universities the total number of PhDs produced over this period is not large, but then only Columbia was producing at significantly higher rates, and universities below the top four were producing very few.

19. Saposs claims he was fired as a result of pressure from Ely and university President Van Hise who objected to his anti-fraternity and pro-student self government activities (Saposs Papers, Box 1, Folder 1). For a brief biography of Saposs, see Howlett (2003)

20. Martin Glaeser completed his Wisconsin MA in 1916, and was appointed as a part-time lecturer in public finance in 1917. His decision to take his PhD at Harvard appears to have been as a result of his sympathy with Senator LaFollette's stand opposing America's involvement in the War. Glaeser refused to sign a petition protesting LaFollette's position and was then not reappointed to his position as a lecturer, although he was back teaching at Wisconsin from 1919 onwards (Glaeser Papers Box 2, Folder 28). Ely was a major supporter of the pro-war platform. Glaeser did not complete until 1925 and will be discussed as a part of the second group of students.

21. Hansen's deep respect for Commons can be seen in the remarks he prepared for Commons's seventieth birthday in 1932, which detailed Commons's contributions to American economics (The Contributions of Professor John R. Commons to American Economics, Hansen Papers, Research Notes, Box 2).

22. Brandeis taught part time and remained at the rank of lecturer until 1962. She later taught a regular course in American economic history. Her first exposure to economic history was as an undergraduate at Radcliffe where she took a course from Edwin Gay. Previous to becoming a graduate student at Wisconsin she worked for the District of Columbia minimum wage board, but the DC minimum wage law was declared unconstitutional in 1923. Initially she went to Wisconsin to study law, and met her future husband, Paul Raushenbush, in a law course.

23. The Groves Act approach to unemployment compensation was by no means universally accepted. Even within the circle of Wisconsin graduates there were proponents of different approaches, both William Leiserson (the Ohio Plan), and John B. Andrews and the AALL (the American Plan), had different model bills. At Wisconsin itself differences over this issue led to a permanent falling out between Walter Morton on the one side and Harold Groves and Elizabeth Brandeis on the other (Walter Morton Interview 1978). Outside of Wisconsin people such as Paul Douglas and Eveline Burns proposed schemes more along European lines, with contributions from employers, employees and the state, and with pooled reserves. Even Witte, who had studied the British system in detail during a visit in 1931, had his doubts about the Wisconsin scheme (Schlabach 1969, 87-92; Schlabach 2001)

24. It should be mentioned here that although health insurance was ultimately not included in the social security act, due to the degree of opposition, many Wisconsin faculty and students were involved in supporting it. This included Commons, Andrews, and Witte, among others (Chasse 1994). Walton Hamilton was also much involved (Rutherford 2005), as was Harry Millis.

25. A significantly revised version of his thesis was published in 1932 as *The Government in Labor Disputes*.

26. Morehouse married Richard T. Ely's daughter.

27. Bringing Friedman to Wisconsin was the idea of Harold Groves who wanted him to work on an NBER project at Wisconsin. Friedman was seen at that time as someone with strong empirical skills, and trained in good part at the National Bureau. Groves had the idea that Friedman should review the statistics offerings at Wisconsin. This, of course, put Friedman, as a very junior (and visiting) member of

the faculty, in a very unenviable position. Friedman wrote his report, a critical one, as one might expect. Groves wanted Friedman appointed as an assistant professor, despite his not having his PhD. The vote on that was 5 to 4 against with Groves, Leschahier, Taylor, and Perlman in favor. The matter then became heavily embroiled in university politics. There may have been some anti-Semitism involved; Selig Perlman certainly thought so, and his relationships with those opposed cooled substantially. It is, however, clear that major issues involving university politics and the relationship between the departments of economics and commerce were also key factors.

28. It is interesting to note that the two major centers for institutionalism, Wisconsin and Columbia, had relatively little to do with each other in terms of hiring of each other's graduate students. The tendency in both places was to hire their own.

29. Richard Lester took his degree at Yale. Yale still had a joint economics and sociology department which contained an industrial relations section.

30. Such as Kenneth Parsons in agricultural economics at Wisconsin, and by Warren Samuels (who was supervised by Witte), and Alan Schmit (who was supervised by Penn), both at Michigan State. Harry Trebing, a Glaeser student, also went to Michigan State.

31. In 1947 Wisconsin established its own Industrial Relations Center. This was an interdisciplinary research center involving faculty from law and economics.

Appendix I: John R. Commons's Students

1. Before Wisconsin

Harry Millis (Commons's first graduate student at Indiana; AM Indiana 1896, PhD Chicago 1899)

2. Wisconsin: Supervised PhDs with date of PhD (from Lampman)

John B Andrews 1908
 Helen L. Sumner (Woodbury) 1908
 Frederick Deibler 1909
 Theresa McMahon 1909
 Ezekiel Downey 1913
 Selig Perlman 1915
 Peter Speck 1916
 Francis Bird 1917
 Rajani Das 1917
 Alvin Hansen (supervised with Ely and Paxson; Commons listed second) 1918
 Don Lescohier (supervised with Ey; Commons listed second) 1920
 Ethel Dietrich 1921
 Jennie Turner 1922
 Harlan McCracken 1923
 Calvin Hoover 1925
 Jacob Perlman 1926
 Stewart Scrimshaw 1926
 William Zeuch 1926
 Grace Zorbaugh 1926
 Anna Mae Campbell (Davis) 1927 (supervisor not listed, but other sources indicate Commons)
 Harold Groves 1927
 William Haber 1927
 Shichiro Matsui 1927
 Edward Morehouse 1927
 Walter Morton (supervised with Scott; Commons listed first) 1927
 Edwin E. Witte 1927
 Elizabeth Brandeis 1928
 Edgar Palmer (supervised with Perlman; Commons listed second) 1928
 John Spielmans 1928
 Alfred Briggs (supervised with Perlman; Commons listed second) 1929
 Ewan Clague (supervised with Jerome; Commons listed first) 1929
 Jean Davis 1929
 Meredith Givens (supervised with Jerome; Commons listed first) 1929
 Elsie Gluck 1929
 John Sherman 1929
 Leonard Logan (supervised with Ross; Commons listed first) 1930
 Miriam West 1930
 Arthur Altmeyer 1931
 John Ewing 1931
 Carey Ganong (supervised with Scott; Commons listed first) 1931
 John Troxell 1931

Edwin Fitch 1933
 Haldor Mohat (supervised with Hibbard; Commons listed first)) 1933
 Elizabeth Paschal 1933
 Gertrude Schmidt (Weiss) 1933
 Harry Weiss 1933

46 PhDs between 1908 and 1933

12 Women PhDs

41 with Commons listed as only or first supervisor (42 including Anna Mae Davis)

All Wisconsin PhDs in Economics between 1908 and 1933 total 112

3. Other graduate students with close contact with Commons

Ira Cross (MA Wisconsin 1906, PhD Stanford 1909)
 William Leiserson (BA Wisconsin 1908, PhD Columbia 1911)
 David Saposs (BA Wisconsin 1911, graduate work at Wisconsin 1913-17, and Columbia 1924-26)
 Henry Hoagland (PhD Columbia 1917)
 Sumner Slichter (MA Wisconsin 1914, PhD Chicago 1918)
 Edward Mittleman (PhD Chicago 1920)
 Martin Glaeser (MA Wisconsin 1916, PhD Harvard 1925)
 Paul Raushenbush (BA Amherst 1920, graduate work at Wisconsin and Brookings)
 Kenneth Parsons (PhD Wisconsin 1940, Hibbard supervised)

4. Other Commons students

Frank Carlton (PhD Wisconsin 1906, no supervisor listed)
 Willford I. King (PhD Wisconsin 1912, no supervisor listed)
 Paul Nystrom (PhD Wisconsin 1914, Scott supervised)
 Holbrook Working (PhD Ag Econ Wisconsin 1921)
 Paul Taylor (BA Wisconsin 1917, PhD Berkeley 1922)
 E. E. Hale (MA Wisconsin 1923)
 Roy Blough (PhD Wisconsin 1929, Kiekhofer supervised)
 Theodore Schultz (PhD Ag Econ Wisconsin 1930, Hibbard supervised)
 Ellison Chalmers (William E. Chalmers? PhD Wisconsin 1933, no supervisor listed)
 Emerson Schmidt (PhD Wisconsin 1935, Perlman supervised)
 Ernest Schwarztrauber (PhD Wisconsin 1941, Perlman supervised)
 Wayne Morse (BA Wisconsin 1923, law degree Minnesota 1928)
 Wilbur Cohen (PhB Wisconsin 1932)
 John A. Fitch
 Bruce Knight
 Katherine Lenroot
 Florence Peterson
 Alice Shoemaker
 Maud Swett

Appendix II: Wisconsin Students Participation in major research projects

1. Students involved in editing the *Documentary History* (1910-1911)

Helen Sumner

John B. Andrews

William Leiserson (assisted Commons on volumes 7 and 8)

2. Students who worked on the Pittsburgh Survey (1907-08)

John A. Fitch

William Leiserson

3. Students who wrote sections of the *History of Labor in the United States*

Volumes I and II (1918):

David Saposs

Helen Sumner

Edward Mittleman

Henry Hoagland

John B. Andrews

Selig Perlman

Volumes III and IV (1935):

Selig Perlman

Don Lescohier

Elizabeth Brandeis

Philip Taft (PhD Wisconsin 1935, Perlman supervised)

4. Students who worked for Charles McCarthy and the US Commission on Industrial Relations, 1914-1915

William Leiserson Assistant Director of Research to McCarthy

Francis Bird

Edwin Witte

David Saposs

Henry Hoagland

Ira B. Cross

Selig Perlman

Sumner Slichter

William Duffus (PhD Wisconsin 1920, Lescohier supervised)

Ezekiel Downey

Frederick Diebler

Peter Speck

Appendix III: Careers of Commons s Students

1. Commons s PhD Students (Date of PhD and Employer as at 1936) (From Lampman)

Universities:

Frederick Deibler 1909 (Northwestern)
 Theresa McMahon 1909 (Washington)
 Selig Perlman 1915 (Wisconsin)
 Francis Bird 1917 (Cincinnati)
 Alvin Hansen 1918 (Minnesota, later at Harvard)
 Don Lescohier 1920 (Wisconsin)
 Harlan McCracken 1923 (Louisiana State)
 Calvin Hoover 1925 (Duke)
 Stewart Scrimshaw 1926 (Marquette)
 Grace Zorbaugh 1926 (Ohio State)
 Harold Groves 1927 (Wisconsin)
 William Haber 1927 (Michigan)
 Shichiro Matsui 1927 (Doshiha, Japan)
 Walter Morton 1927 (Wisconsin)
 Edwin E. Witte 1927 (Wisconsin)
 Elizabeth Brandeis 1928 (Wisconsin)
 Edgar Palmer 1928 (Kentucky)
 Leonard Logan 1930 (Oklahoma)
 John Ewing 1931 (Oklahoma)

Colleges:

Ethel Dietrich 1921 (Mount Holyoke)
 William Zeuch 1926 (Black Mountain)
 Jean Davis 1929 (Wells)
 Miriam West 1930 (New Jersey College for Women)
 Carey Ganong 1931 (Kalamazoo)

Government/NGO s

John B Andrews 1908 (American Association of Labor Legislation)
 Helen L. Sumner (Woodbury) 1908 (Deceased, formerly with the Children s Bureau)
 Ezekiel Downey 1913 (Deceased, formerly with the Insurance Commission of Pennsylvania)
 Peter Speek 1916 (Bureau of Labor Statistics)
 Rajani Das 1917 (International Labor Office)
 Jennie Turner 1922 (Vocational Education, Wisconsin)
 Jacob Perlman 1926 (Bureau of Labor Statistics)
 Edward Morehouse 1927 (Wisconsin Public Service Commission. Previously at Northwestern)
 Ewan Clague 1929 (Social Security Board)
 Meredith Givens 1929 (SSRC, Division of Placement and Unemployment Insurance, New York)
 Elsie Gluck 1929 (Works Progress Administration)
 Arthur Altmeyer 1931 (Social Security Board)
 Edwin Fitch 1933 (Office of Coordinator of Transportation)
 Haldor Mohat 1933 (Federal Communications Commission)
 Elizabeth Paschal 1933 (Bureau of Home Economics)

Gertrude Schmidt (Weiss) 1933 (Department of Labor)
 Harry Weiss 1933 (Social Security Board)

Private Business

Anna Mae Campbell (Davis) 1927 (Law practice, Wisconsin)
 John Spielmans 1928 (Independent Research)
 John Troxell 1931 (Shoe Manufacturer s Board of Trade, also taught at New York University)

2. Other Commons Students

Harry Millis (Stanford, Chicago)
 Ira Cross (Berkeley)
 John A. Fitch (Industrial Editor of the *Survey*, Director of Industrial Courses, New York School of Social Work)
 William Leiserson (Antioch College, National Labor Relations Board)
 David Saposs (Brookwood College, National Labor Relations Board)
 Henry Hoagland (Illinois, Federal Home Loan Bank)
 Sumner Slichter (Cornell, Harvard)
 Edward Mittleman (Oregon Agricultural College)
 Paul Taylor (Berkeley)
 Martin Glaeser (Wisconsin)
 Paul Raushenbush (Wisconsin Unemployment Insurance Commission)
 Theodore Schultz (Iowa State, Chicago)
 Wilbur Cohen (Social Security Board)
 Katherine Lenroot (Chief, Children s Bureau)
 Wayne Morse (Dean of Law, University of Oregon)

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- Martin G. Glaeser Papers, University of Wisconsin Archives.
- Alvin H. Hansen Papers, Harvard University Archives.
- William M. Leiserson Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
- Charles McCarthy Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
- Theresa S. McMahon Papers, University Of Washington Special Collections.
- Edward W. Morehouse Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
- Walter Morton Interview (1978), University of Wisconsin Archives, Oral History Project.
- Kenneth H. Parsons Interview (1976), University of Wisconsin Archives, Oral History Project.
- David J. Saposs Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.
- Edwin E. Witte Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

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