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微观经济学

MICROECONOMICS

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前 言

在 80 年代之前,人们对西方经济学理论的了解甚少,更谈不上对其有系统客观的介绍和研究了。在那时,人们不敢接触它,因为许多人把它视为是资本主义制度赖以生存和发展的重要支柱之一,是维系资本主义经济体系的理论基础,与我们社会主义的经济理论格格不入、水火不相容。在此种背景下,人们往往对其采取回避的态度。

自 1992 年中国共产党第十四次全国代表大会确定在我国实行社会主义市场经济体制以来,我国的经济体制改革迈出了更大的步伐,国民经济发展速度明显加快,增长幅度显著提高。与此同时,世界经济全球化的趋势更加明显,特别是 1995 年 1 月 1 日世界贸易组织的正式成立,对此起到了推波助澜的作用。在我国“复关”受阻以后,我国政府仍以积极态度申请加入世界贸易组织。上述这些因素促使我国更加积极扩展国际经济交往,更加广泛地发展对外经济贸易关系,我国的对外贸易迅速扩大,进出口贸易总额连续三年居世界第 11 位。另一方面,我国引进外资的规模在发展中国家名列前茅,在世界上也居前列。这使我国在全球经济中具有了举足轻重的地位。

我国参与国际经济合作的领域和范围的不断扩大和加深的客观现实迫切要求我们对西方经济理论有一个较为全面透彻的了解,为此,需要我们对其做一个较为客观和系统的介绍,对其进行较为系统、深入的研究,以便为有关部门对我国经济在何种

范围内、何等程度上参与世界经济提供一些理论依据和参照系数,使我国在当今激烈的国际经济竞争中能够做到知己知彼,百战不殆。

自“重商主义”理论产生以来,西方经济学理论已经有数百年历史,学术流派也层出不穷。各种流派的理论在不同发展阶段、不同的地区和国家发挥过积极和消极作用。我们今天学习、研究西方经济学理论,目的是从中借鉴一些对我们有益的东西,使之洋为中用,促进我国经济持续、健康地发展。在学习和研究过程中,我们当然应当有所鉴别,既不能全然排斥,也不能盲目崇拜,照抄照搬。

自改革开放以来,我国学术界与西方学术界的交流日趋频繁,经济理论学术领域里的交流也在蓬勃发展。为了满足社会对学习、了解西方经济理论中微观经济学知识的迫切要求,满足读者熟悉、掌握微观经济学理论的一些基本概念和术语的英语表达方式的愿望,我们用浅近的英文编写了这本小册子。我们相信它可以帮助具有一定基础的读者通过阅读本书,掌握一些经济学基础理论,了解西方国家经济运作的基本规律,并提高英文水平。我们希望这个一箭双雕的目的,在读者们的努力下,能够实现。

本书由对外经济贸易大学诸葛霖教授和北京工业大学对外经济贸易系宋格兰副教授编著。由于编者业务水平有限,错误与缺点在所难免,恳请各界读者不吝赐教。

编 者

1996年10月

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Chapter 1

What Is Economics All About^①

I . Where Did Economics Come From?

The emergence^② and development of every branch of science^③ invariably^④ has its own objective.^⑤ For example, geometry^⑥ developed from the need for the measurement^⑦ of farm lands^⑧. Then where did economics come from? Why has economics developed remarkably^⑨ in recent years? The Western economists believe that economics has developed from the ever-present^⑩ scarcity^⑪ of resources^⑫ and the need for people to make appropriate choices. According to the economists, there are two kinds of goods which can satisfy people's wants,^⑬ namely, free goods^⑭ and economic goods.^⑮ The former refer to all things given freely by nature to human beings. These free goods are in-exhaustible.^⑯ The economic goods are limited in supply, but they are also very important to people's life. The people's desires are

① 做些什么,从事什么 ② 产生 ③ 每门科学 ④ 总是 ⑤ 目标 ⑥ 几何学
⑦ 丈量 ⑧ 农田 ⑨ 异常地 ⑩ 永远存在的 ⑪ 缺乏 ⑫ 资源 ⑬ 满足人们需要
⑭ 自由货物 ⑮ 经济货物 ⑯ 用之不尽的

unlimited, but the economic goods which can satisfy people's wants are limited. Economic goods or the resources needed to produce these goods are relatively insufficient. That is what we call scarcity of goods. Specifically speaking, in economics, the term scarcity simply means limited supply. In this sense, all economic goods are scarce relative to people's desire for them. So scarcity is used here in contrast with^① inexhaustible supply. In another sense, scarcity is absolute,^② because it exists in all periods of time and in all societies.

Since economic goods are scarce, a choice has to be made as to how factors of production will be employed, and customers,^③ too, must decide which of their wants are the most pressing.^④ Scarcity and choice, therefore, are fundamental to economists. How should people satisfy their different wants with limited goods and resources? Scarcity requires that people should choose to use existing resources to produce economic goods to better satisfy their wants. Specifically speaking, it deals with three basic questions: First, what goods should be produced and how many goods should be produced? Second, how should the goods be produced? Third, for whom should the goods be produced? These three questions are basic economic problems existing in human societies. It is to solve these problems that economics has come into being. The ever-present existence of scarcity and the need for people to make choices have all along^⑤ caused economics to develop. The theme of this book is microeconomics.

① 与之相对照 ② 绝对的 ③ 顾客们 ④ 迫切需要 ⑤ 一直在, 始终地

I . What Is the Purpose of the Study of Economics?

The formation^① and development of economics is based on the study of economic problems of Western countries. Without economic problems, economics wouldn't have come into being. Western economists believe that in Western countries, a lot of problems exist such as unemployment,^② inflation,^③ the shortage of energy,^④ slow growth of productivity,^⑤ slow economic development or stagnation,^⑥ environmental pollution,^⑦ unfair distribution^⑧ of income and so on. Economics is aimed at solving these problems.

We now enumerate^⑨ some outstanding problems as follows:

1. *Productivity and Economic Growth*

Since the 1970's, the growth rate of per capita national income in capitalist countries, especially in the United States, has been on the decrease. What has caused the slow-down of the economic growth? Figures indicate that the percentage of national income spent on new machines, equipment, workshops, etc. has been reduced, and the speed of making inventions^⑩ and renovations^⑪ has also slowed. What are the causes for the decline? Is it caused by unstable economic growth and uncertainties^⑫ of other economic factors? Or is it caused by high taxation^⑬ imposed on individuals and enterprises? Or is it caused by economic burden aris-

① 形成 ② 失业 ③ 通货膨胀 ④ 能源 ⑤ 生产力 ⑥ 滞胀 ⑦ 环境污染
⑧ 分配不公 ⑨ 列举 ⑩ 发明 ⑪ 创新,革新 ⑫ 不稳定因素 ⑬ 赋税

ing from huge unemployment subsidies, ^① old age pensions, ^② and medical aid ^③ which improve the worker's working and living conditions? Is there any way to overcome these difficulties? Should interference ^④ from government be increased or reduced?

2. *Economic Growth and Environmental pollution*

The development of national economy can provide people with many conveniences. Without cars, aeroplanes, and all kinds of electrical goods, our life wouldn't be as comfortable as it is today. Without iron and steel, cement, and glass, economy could not develop at such a speed as it does today. The utilisation ^⑤ of pesticides ^⑥ and chemical fertilizer ^⑦ makes it possible to greatly increase agricultural output. But this development has also brought with it serious environmental pollution problems. Is the large scale environmental pollution the inevitable result of economic growth? If it is, then what is the proper economic growth rate that can avoid serious pollution? If not, how should pollution be reduced while we maintain the present economic growth rate?

3. *Unemployment and Inflation*

Unemployment and inflation are two serious problems disrupting ^⑧ Western societies. After the Second World War, many countries in the West experienced ^⑨ several economic crises aside from the one that occurred in 1929 - 1933 which made millions of people unemployed. However, many countries are trying hard to control the inflation and unemployment rate. Some even set a spe-

① 补贴 ② 养老金 ③ 医疗补助 ④ 干预 ⑤ 利用, 使用 ⑥ 杀虫剂 ⑦ 化肥 ⑧ 破坏, 使混乱 ⑨ 经历

cific low level of inflation and unemployment rate in the form of law.^① However, it is very difficult to put them into practice.^② For instance, in 1978, the U.S. Congress set a mid-term target of 4% unemployment and 3% inflation but in reality these targets were difficult to meet. As a matter of fact, the inflation rate and unemployment rate far exceeded^③ the figures^④ set by the government.

Why does a continuous high inflation rate exist together with a high unemployment rate? How can countries prevent the occurrence^⑤ of such a phenomenon?^⑥ What unemployment level is acceptable? Can economic recessions^⑦ like the one that happened in the early 1930's be avoided? What inflation rate is tolerable?^⑧ Why do prices rise by only 5 - 6% in some countries while in others by 30 - 40%? Why has inflation occurred in so many countries since the 1970's? All these problems have relevance^⑨ to economic stability and the causes for and consequences of economic recession.

4. *Poverty and Unequality^⑩ in Distribution of Income*

Although Western countries are relatively developed, poverty still remains a serious social problem. How can poverty be tackled^⑪ and prevented? How is poverty defined? Is it possible to wipe out poverty in the course of economic development? Poverty must have something to do with unequal distribution of income. But is equal distribution of income a satisfactory or achievable^⑫ goal? Two basic economic questions are involved in resolving the prob-

① 以法律形式定下来 ② 付诸实施 ③ 超过 ④ 数字 ⑤ 发生 ⑥ 现象
⑦ 衰退 ⑧ 能容忍的 ⑨ 与……有关联的 ⑩ 不平等 ⑪ 对付, 处理 ⑫ 可达到的