

## Pricking A Brisbane Bubble

THE editorial reprinted in this issue from the *Christian Science Monitor*, rebuking a writer who said that the late William Rockefeller had "done much to benefit the country, and to solve the problems of others by giving them work," evidently referred to an article written by Arthur Brisbane, editor of the *New York Evening Journal*. Mr. Brisbane has attained the proud eminence of having a greater number of readers, and receiving a larger salary, than any other editor, a success due chiefly to his amazing energy and his ability to say the undisputed thing in such a solemn way. The son of a wealthy landowner, who held radical views and took an active part in the Fourierite and co-operative propaganda of the Brook Farm era, he was in his youth a professed believer in the Single Tax. The changing years brought prosperity through his attachment to the fortunes of William Randolph Hearst, and having grown rich by speculation in land, he has become respectable and conservative in his old age, and no longer pretends to advocate the principles laid down by Henry George. Yet by some strange tie of the past he cannot wholly escape from the aftershine of his youthful radicalism, and his occasional petulant and cynical references to the Single Taxers show that he knows that they are right, even though he does nothing to further their aims.

A student of Voltaire, Mr. Brisbane may be familiar with a letter written about 160 years ago by the great French thinker, in which he said: "These abuses and evils that imperil France exist because the men of intelligence, who know their source and the remedy, are cowards. It is the great misfortune of honest men that they are too often cowards." Possibly it is not cowardice that keeps Mr. Brisbane from denouncing land monopoly as the great fundamental injustice. He may have become a cynic through watching Mr. Hearst's success in fooling so many people with his pretense of devotion to the public welfare. It must be hard to think hopefully of human progress when he regards the millions who buy and read the loathly Hearst newspapers and magazines. Whatever the reason may be, it is certain that when he recalls his convictions of 30 years ago Mr. Arthur Brisbane must have some uncomfortable moments.

## The Muscle Shoals Power Project

A TYPICAL example of the way in which land speculators manipulate legislation to promote their selfish ends, is found in the widespread agitation throughout the Southeastern States in favor of granting the Muscle Shoals water power, located in Alabama, to Henry Ford for a period of 100 years. In addition to the enormous value of the power provided by the Tennessee river, Congress is urged to turn over the dams, buildings, and other property on which \$100,000,000, has been expended by the wise

paternal Federal Government, to Mr. Ford. For all this plant he is to pay the United States \$5,000,000, and 4 per cent. interest on the \$42,000,000, that the Government is to advance to complete the unfinished dams.

The popular worship of successful money makers; the curious notion that a very rich man is in a class apart from ordinary mortals, may partly account for the fact that this most outrageous proposition to give away one of the most valuable water powers on the continent is strongly favored in Congress, and may secure a majority in both Houses at the next session. The farmers have been deluded into supporting the scheme through a half-promise that part of the power will be used to produce cheap nitrates for fertilizing purposes. The real force behind the project, however, is the greed of land speculators, who are spending their money on a propaganda designed to show the immense increase in land values that will follow the establishment of Ford industries in Alabama. City sites for a population of millions have already been mapped, and the credulous investor is urged to buy barren acres at city lot prices. If Congress yields to the clamor of the speculators great fortunes will be made for a time by the owners of what is now practically worthless land.

It is fortunate that in Senator George W. Norris, of Nebraska, who has led the fight in the Senate against the grant to Mr. Ford, there has been found a fearless defender of the people's interest who protests against the gift of Government property and power privileges on what he holds are entirely inadequate terms. He has so far been successful in preventing favorable action by the Senate on the Ford proposal, and if he is supported by those Americans who believe that the great natural resources of the country should be utilized for the general welfare, instead of profit-making for a favored few, he should be able to secure better terms for the development of the Muscle Shoals power.

## Keeping a White Post White

THE attitude of those calling themselves conservatives, who maintain that the interests of society are best served by strict adherence to existing social institutions, is questioned by Mr. G. K. Chesterton, by no means a radical, and hardly what in the United States would be termed a "progressive." As an outspoken antagonist of Socialism he finds himself, somewhat to his distaste, in the company of reactionaries who vigorously protest against all movements looking to the improvement of social and economic conditions on the general principle that innovations are wrong. To all demands for constructive legislation designed to abolish admitted abuses the reply of the conservative is: "Leave well enough alone. See what happened in Russia when the old order was overthrown."

The desire to maintain outgrown laws and timeworn institutions because of the possible danger of destroying something of value that has come to be associated with them, meets with no sympathy from Mr. Chesterton. He

believes that society is a living growth that must either obey the laws of its being or perish. Standing still, he says, means stagnation and petrification. Even to preserve the existing social order requires constant readjustment to new conditions and influences from without and within.

To the conservative's plea that things be left as they are, for fear that worse evils may come, Mr. Chesterton replies: "But what if things will not remain as they are? Here is a post painted white. Leave it alone, advise the opponents of reform. Don't try to paint it some other color. So we shall always have a white post." But that, points out Mr. Chesterton, is exactly what they will not have. Left to the influence of wind, dust, and rain, your white post soon becomes gray, and in time black. To keep it white it must be repainted. Letting things alone does not guarantee against change.

Dan Beard, artist and head of the admirable Boy Scout organization, has pictured in a cartoon the mistaken idea of the conservative that there would be no labor troubles or social disturbances if it were not for the radical agitators who stir up strife. In the middle of a broad, smooth-flowing stream he depicted an upthrown mass of rock, solid, unyielding; around which the water swirls and foams. The rock is the conservative, whose objection to the passing of the river causes the turbulent rapids. The real disturber is the immovable object. The worst enemy of existing institutions is not the fantastic theorist who wants to make the world anew overnight, but the stubborn reactionary who clings to old forms long after they have outlived their usefulness.

## The British Labor Platform

WE have received a copy of the Labor Speaker's Handbook used by the British Labor Party. We quote from that part referring to the Taxation of Land Values which leaves little to be desired:

The Labor Party holds that the whole value of land—that is whatever cannot be shown to be due to actual expenditure of money or labor by the owner or occupier—ought to be public revenue; but until this can be secured by public ownership, the Party favors a carefully devised scheme for the Rating and Taxation of the owners of Land Values, in relief of the occupiers, provided that adequate steps are taken to prevent the owner from securing for himself, either by raising the rent or the selling price of land, the benefits that are intended to accrue to the occupier or the community.—See pamphlet, "Labor and the Countryside."

### BASIC PRINCIPLES

This policy is based on the following principles:

The land which Nature provided as the physical basis of life ought to be treated as common property.

When land is in private hands, those who hold it should be called upon to pay to the people a rent or tax for it.

That this tax or rent should be based on the true market value of the land apart from the value of any improvements which may be in or upon it.

The tax should be made payable whether the land is being used or not.

### ECONOMIC EFFECTS

The immediate effect of a direct tax upon the value of land would be the opening up of land for productive purposes. It would end the present system which allows a landowner to be assessed at £490 for land which has a value of £50,339 when it is required for building purposes (the Bellingham site purchased by the L. C. C.). Under Labor's land value tax scheme, the owners of land would be taxed according to the value of their land as entered in the taxation roll: this same valuation would be the basis of the purchase price. The pressure of the tax so levied would compel the owners of land either to use their land or to make it easy of access for those who would be willing to use it. In this way we would promote the development of the land, and, by virtue of the fact that more land had been brought into use, rents would be reduced. The effect of opening up greater opportunities to labor must be readily appreciated by those who are suffering from unemployment. Apart from these economic considerations, there is the just claim, that as the land value is unquestionably the creation of the community as a whole, therefore the community have a moral right to appropriate through the machinery of taxation a part, or, if need be, the whole of the land value of the country.

There are further declarations in condemnation of indirect taxation and the resulting increased cost of living. We cannot avoid contrasting these explicit and economically sound statements of the British Labor Party with the platform of the American Labor Party in which the principle of so much importance to labor is timidly advanced and linked up with measures that are more than questionable:

We favor the repeal of all taxes on articles of consumption and common use, and the substitution therefor of a rapidly progressing inheritance tax, an excess profits tax, high surtaxes on large incomes and a special tax on land values due not to the productive labor of the owner, but to speculation or commercial growth.

## Single Tax and Labor Unions

HENRY GEORGE himself was a member of a printers' union, but Single Taxers are under no delusion regarding the purely temporary nature of all gains in wages brought about by combinations among workmen. Slowly but surely the irresistible pressure of the man out of work and bidding for employment—that unnatural auction active at all times and accentuated in dull times, that characterizes the labor market—must determine the rate of wages in the final adjustment.

That unions are able to arrest the tendency of wages to a minimum in isolated occupations, or again in highly skilled trades, may be conceded, but that they are effectual in unskilled occupations, or that they have any appreciable effect upon the general rate of wages, will hardly be contended by the more intelligent trades unionists. It is one of the curious anomalies of the situation that if labor could effect a general or universal increase in the rate of wages, it would be in the final result no increase at all, since it