

Baby Welfare Week.

Chicago has devoted a week to raising revenue, by means of voluntary contributions, for the better care of babies. The amount raised was not large; indeed, taking into consideration the number of babies needing attention, it is painfully small. That the babies need help is evident from the fact that nearly one fifth die in the first year. Why? Because the mothers do not know how, or are unable to take care of them. We spend vast sums of money to teach farmers how to raise hogs; but we must take up, by means of subscriptions, a few dollars to teach mothers how to raise children. Possibly the financial interests involved account for the difference. If hogs are decimated by cholera, the price of ham will advance. If a fifth of the babies die—well, the other four-fifths will keep up the population, and babies, unlike hogs, cannot be turned into cash.



But how does it come that there is no money to pay for the care of the babies? Every child that comes to Chicago, whether through Castle Garden or by the Stork Express adds to the site value of the city. When there was but one million people in Chicago its lands were worth much less than now. When it shall have three million people its lands will be worth much more than now. Only a part of this rental value of Chicago's land is taken for the care of the children. The fact that the remainder is left in the hands of those who do not make it, while there is such dire need of funds to save the little ones, might tempt the visitor from Mars to think Chicago the national asylum for the feeble minded—were it not for the fact that other cities are guilty of the same offense.

S. C.



Cleveland's Good Example.

Since the days of Tom L. Johnson the city of Cleveland has been a leader among progressive municipalities. Now the first steps have been taken by its city council to inaugurate another reform. An ordinance was introduced on May 18 authorizing condemnation of property for a street extension. Included in the ordinance was a unique provision for acquirement by the city of land along the proposed street as well as of land actually needed for street purposes. This insures to the city the increased land values created by its expenditure in cutting through the street. Hitherto private land owners have been permitted to appropriate these values. They are still permitted to do so in nearly every American city but

Cleveland. Some accounts say that after the street has been constructed the city will sell its adjoining land. That would be a mistake. To make the new policy perfect the land should be retained and leased. Then if in the future the land should still further increase in value the city will have the benefit. If, on the other hand, values should decline, individual citizens will not be compelled to endure the loss. In either case the situation would be superior to what exists under present conditions. Cleveland's example deserves wide imitation.

S. D.



Philosophy and the Unearned Increment.

"A scientific truth is a statement of which the opposite is inconceivable." And again: "A proposition of which the negative is inconceivable is necessarily true in relation to human intelligence."—John Fiske, in "Cosmic Philosophy." An almost universally admitted principle in trade is that capital is entitled to a fair return for its use, when it is employed in moral and legitimate business. The reverse of this proposition, constituting as it does, a negation of the foregoing, would violate the ethics of both interest and wages. Obviously the antithesis of a true proposition cannot also be true; yet just such an antithesis obtains when returns are secured from sources wherein there has been no investment of capital. Therefore, the owner of unused land, which accrues value by the investment of capital by owners of adjacent used land, is receiving returns on capital which he has not invested; he is receiving dividends on stock that consists entirely of water; he is receiving something for nothing; he is robbing the public by taking that which the public has earned and giving nothing in return therefor. In short, according to Fiske's Philosophy, the absorber of community-created wealth is a menace to community life, for the reason that his presence is a negation of a verified truth; his relation to the weal of the community is that of a down-puller instead of an up-lifter. By right, his name should be Dennis.

J. A. DEMUTH.



A Sign of Progress.

Significant action, which may mark the beginning of a radical change in the policy of organized charities, was taken by the National Conference of Charities and Corrections in the meeting at Memphis beginning on May 12. This action was the appointment of a committee on social legislation to investigate, first, taxation reform as it relates to congestion and poverty; second, social

insurance. Encouragement is thus at last offered to those social workers who have labored so long in a seemingly hopeless effort to turn the attention of influential charitable organizations toward fundamental principles. The action appears to be similar to what was urged by Joseph Fels on the Conference of Charities which met in 1911 in Boston. Mr. Fels' suggestion embodied in a letter to the members was as follows: "If it is a fact that charity workers are anxious to learn how to remove the cause of poverty, would it be unreasonable to ask this conference to take some action in the matter? Why not, for instance, appoint a committee to report to your next meeting, the duty of the committee to be a thorough investigation of the merits of different proposed plans to put an end to poverty?"



No action was taken at that meeting on Mr. Fels' suggestion, but he sowed some seed, no doubt, that since has sprouted. This year Mrs. Mary Fels sent the Memphis conference a letter urging that her husband's suggestion be given attention. The idea was ably advocated by such workers as Alexander Johnson of New Jersey, Benjamin C. Marsh of New York, Judge A. B. Pittman of Memphis and others. Now that a start has been made it seems reasonable to look for further progress each year. Is it too much to hope that these meetings may yet become conferences, not of organized charity, but of organizations for justice?

S. D.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

SOUTH AMERICAN NEWS.

Buenos Aires, April 20.

Another link has at last been added to the chain of Republics or Provinces of Republics which in South America have declared for a system of taxation based on reason, equity and justice.

Readers of "The Public" already know that the Brazilian State of Rio Grande do Sul was the first to break new ground, closely followed by the President of Paraguay.* Since then the Department of Montevideo, including the city of that name, has presented a bill to the Uruguayan Chamber decreeing that after the passing of the measure all taxes for city purposes shall be based on a tax on land values exclusive of improvements.

Now we have Governor Carcano of the Argentine Province of Cordoba presenting and strongly supporting a similar measure for the Province over which he rules.

True, neither the Montevidean nor the Cordoba measures are on the statute book, but those who, living in these Republics, have borne the heat of the

battle for fairer methods of taxation, believe that brighter days are at hand.

The rapid spread of ideas in favor of replacing the existing chaotic systems of taxation with one based on Land Value Taxation is largely due to the liberality of the late Mr. Joseph Fels. This gentleman assisted by placing 300 copies of the Spanish Singletax paper ("Impuesto Unico") at the disposal of a well known enthusiast who has been for years visiting the southern parts of South America and placed the paper in the hands of men, who, if convinced of the fairness of a proposed reform, and of the benefits of its adoption, could, off their own bat, do much to help get the reform on the statute book.

In addition to assistance from Mr. Fels, such enthusiasts as Dr. Felix Vitale, Dr. Manuel Herrera y Reissig, Professor Lasplaces, Sr. C. Cotello, all of Montevideo, have done splendid work; while in Argentina Sr. C. C. Vigil, Editor of "Mundo Argentino," Dr. T. Varsi, Dr. S. Barada, and Sr. J. Oliva Nogueira are always, along with Mr. Robert Balmer, busy with the Argentine section of the cause.

Another helper who has done good service is Sr. Baldomiro Argente, that enthusiastic Singletax journalist, who, writing from Madrid for a number of important South American papers published in Spanish, has sown seed broadcast, some of which is taking root in most unexpected places.

C. N. MACINTOSH.

PROGRESS IN CANADA.

Matsqui, B. C., April 28.

Vancouver has taken a step forward instead of backward. The City Council voted 11 to 4 to continue the policy of exempting improvements from taxation, and 10 to 5 to increase the tax rate 10 per cent, making the municipal rate 22 mills net.

Talking to real estate men in Vancouver yesterday, some of them declared that local land values had shrunk 50 per cent in the past year. As the assessment on land values was increased over 4 per cent over 1913 and the tax rate 10 per cent, this would be equivalent to an increased burden of 130 per cent on the planet grabber—provided that values have declined 50 per cent. Of course central business sites have not depreciated much, but in some of the outlying districts the decline has been even greater than 50 per cent.

But values are still abnormal—are still several times as high in proportion to population as in New York or Chicago. At the usual calculation of \$4 per head of population as the value of the choicest acre in the community, land on the corner of Hastings and Granville streets should not be worth more than \$700,000 per acre, yet I saw a sign board—beginning to look aged now, for want of paint—it looked fresher eighteen months ago when I struck Vancouver—on a corner several blocks from Granville and Hastings and not on a business street, bearing this magic legend: "This valuable corner for sale; buyer can assume the \$100,000 mortgage." The lot is a short

*See Publics of February 20, page 175, and of April 3, page 321.