

FAIRHOPE: TOWARDS MUNICIPAL INCORPORATION

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY OF JUST MORE

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Individualism produced both wealth and poverty in the nineteenth century. Seeking to escape the poverty and disharmony of the industrial world and find a remedy, reformers experimented with collectivist societies to soothe America's ills. No longer content with religion or politics as a means to remedy the sickness, reformers searched the new disciplines of applied sciences for the cure. An altered economic plan became the new hope. As socialistic communes continued to fail, Ernest B. Gaston, heeding the counsel of his friend Professor James Bellangee, decided that forced cooperation would not work. Instead he decided that individualism, although associated with many of society's problems, was congruent with human nature. Determined to found a colony, Gaston would adapt the economic theory proposed by Henry George in Progress and Poverty to his colony. The single tax would become the framework of the economic organization of Fairhope. According to Fairhope's Constitution, the purpose shall be to establish "a colony, free from all forms of private monopoly, and to secure to its members therein, equality of opportunity, the full reward of individual efforts, and the benefits of co-operation in matters of general concern."¹ With this benevolent purpose Gaston set out to apply the principles of the single tax and democracy on the east coast of Mobile Bay in the fall of 1894. He expected many turmoils in starting a colony from scratch; however, Gaston never envisioned that only ten years after its founding it would be considered undemocratic by a majority of its residents.

Not more than a year after settlement, Gaston and Fairhope were saddled with their first division. The division arose out of the demands of a new group of members who were prominent single taxers themselves and their call for more revisions in the Fairhope Industrial Association's constitution. The dispute evolved into a power struggle between Gaston and the Springer-Brokaw faction which Gaston eventually won.

Gaston and Fairhope both emerged from the Springer-Brokaw conflict victorious, yet maimed. Although regaining colony control, Gaston still faced deleterious repercussions from the struggle. Despite his exodus from Fairhope, Springer and his influence continued to taint Fairhope's credibility in the national single-tax movement. Mr. Miller, editor of the Single Taxer, asked "in the light of the Springer charges for an investigation of Fairhope."² Expecting an endorsement or financial assistance from the Chicago Single Tax Club before he left, Gaston reported upon returning from Chicago that the club had refused to support Fairhope because Mr. Moeller, a member, "had read letters of Springer making false and exaggerated charges against the members of the colony."³ The bitter dispute between Springer and Gaston followed Fairhope in her quest for national acceptance and left Gaston and his associates basically without any broad support. The colony would have to persevere alone for a while to "make good theories work."⁴

This initial conflict not only created bad publicity for Fairhope but also engendered itself in a retaliatory reaction on the part of the management to criticism. Betrayed by the single taxers who

just talked, the management of Fairhope devoted their lives to proving that the single tax was feasible. Therefore Fairhope became Gaston's crusade. Having just survived the Springer's faction attack and shunned by the national movement, Gaston and the management developed a defensive attitude that allowed criticism but seldom accepted its validity and always mandated a challenge. This defensive stance created an adversarial relationship between Gaston and all critics. Jumping to defend any attack on the administration, Gaston foresook a more tactful perspective that would have proved valuable in negotiating the political struggles. At some points the aim of the practical application of the single tax seemed lost in the continuous display of controversy.

To apply the single tax, the management obviously required a community of colonists, however the community lacked a large population of single taxers in 1897. To compensate for this deficiency in bodies, the Association in 1898 decided to grant leases to nonmembers for 99 years "provided that no rights of the Association will be jeopardized thereby."⁵ Although compromising ideological unity among residents, the members believed that this plan was the only practical alternative because, as the resolution presented by Secretary Gaston stated,

it is necessary to the successful and conspicuous exemplification of our great principle of taking land values for public use that we should have population and that our land should be privately held and put to use, [and] nearly three-fourths of the land owned by the association is still unused and upon which the resident members might be called upon to pay the state and county taxes to protect their homes.⁶

To insure that these nonmembers could in no way detain the Association from its purpose of implementing the single tax, the secretary secured "the services of J. A. Webb, Esq., in devising form of lease to legally protect association in the collection of the rental value of land."⁷

While resolving the population problem, the admittance of nonmembers to colony lands created a dilemma that the colony architects had not anticipated in designing the constitution. While all members have a voice in colony affairs, these nonmember tenants have no such voice. The single-tax members were simultaneously tenants and landlords. The nonmembers were only tenants. Expecting that the nonmembers would convert to single-tax ideology, the management believed that the tenants would only temporarily remain in a subordinate status; however, a majority of these tenants decided not to apply for membership. They received the benefits of the colony without paying the hundred dollar membership fee. Although they were not single taxers, the nonmembers began to clamor for political rights and this became a matter of constant agitation over the next ten years.

On January 14, 1905, a meeting of leaseholders unanimously adopted certain memorials and resolutions that immediately initiated a major conflict between management and these objecting tenants. This Lease-holders' Committee presented two resolutions to the executive council of the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation that memorialized the council:

to submit the question as to whether or not any office constituting the Executive Council and receiving a salary, or in any manner in the pay of the Corporation is eligible to be a member of the rateing board having power to fix the

rent from year to year, [and] to take such steps with as little delay as possible, to fix a legal limit beyond which the rating board cannot annually raise the rents to double and triple, quadruple and even quintuple the rents of the year previous.⁸

From a single-tax economic policy standpoint, the Fairhope management rejected the proposition entirely. The Fairhope plan, in accordance with single-tax doctrine, maintains that "every holder of Fairhope land shall pay its full rental value from year to year."⁹ The Fairhope constitution sets forth that "all of the unearned increment" must be taken to insure that it will "equalize the varying advantages of different tracts."¹⁰ The reply of the executive council makes clear that they will not deviate from single-tax doctrine.

After establishing that the objecting tenants' proposal for limitations on rate increase is unconstitutional, the council rather than attempting to quiet the controversy compounds the problems by retaliating.

Overblowing this proposal as attempts to overthrow the single tax, the executive council fails to realize that the memorial is more a protest of present conditions than an objection to the single tax. The objector's proposals stem not from an objection to the single tax but as a reaction to the raising of rents "to double or triple, quadruple and even quintuple the rent 'of the previous year'." Their irrational accusations of management selfishness and threats of "no peace until there is a limit fixed to this non-ending and excessive taxation" signify emotional protests not reasoned policy discussions. The dissidents are reacting to a fear of no control over their rental values and are not actively pushing for the abolishment of the single

tax. In the reply of the executive council, the council members even realize that there is "no indication from the memorials presented to the Council that the objectors have given any serious consideration to the question of what the land is really worth."¹² Admittedly the objectors argue for more political autonomy for the nonmembers, "that any system of taxation that cannot be safely trusted with the whole people is not worthy of consideration"; however, the management has no reason to suspect this protest would mandate any drastic changes in Fairhope policy.

Instead of attempting to simply answer the dissenters and allow the controversy to quiet down, the executive council's reply chastises the objecting tenants for criticizing the management. Not only do the objecting tenants stoop to personal attacks, but the Council decides to descend to their level and accuse the dissenters of a "discourtesy which can hardly be excused by the ignorance of the constitution which it discloses."¹⁴ Continuing to fuel the fire of antagonism, the Council holds that

there is not therefore the slightest ground for suspicion that the members of the Council were influenced by selfish motives to favor high rents--though there may be room for question as to whether those who ask for low rentals are not influenced by such motive.¹⁵

Although they are justified in retaliating, the management does not further the progress of the single tax by antagonizing the dissident tenants. With the Lease-holder's Committee in no position to alter Corporation policy, it makes better sense to answer their arguments objectively and then move on rather than inciting the objectors to further action.

The assault by Dr. Hail upon Professor Bellangee (although humorous in retrospective) illustrate the animosity that developed from these continued retaliatory verbal assaults. Mrs. Howland initiated a criticism of an unnamed writer for presenting Colony affairs

in a way which could not but be offensive to those referred to by name and by implication, and injurious to the Colony.

Mr. Bancroft followed in the same strain and Prof. Bellangee took the floor to continue the discussion. He had said but a few words when Dr. Hail, . . ., leaped from his chair and made a fierce assault upon the Professor.

[The following morning.]

Dr. Hail crossed the street and assaulted him again, striking him on the head with a very effective "billy" in the shape of a coin bag, which he was carrying to the store, knocking him down, and then choking him to persuade to desist.¹⁶

Luckily Bellangee was not seriously injured; however, this unfortunate incident reveals that the conflict had gotten out of hand. There is no excuse whatsoever for Dr. Hail's actions, but neither should the management have continued with retaliatory criticisms to a point where a person could lose control. As Professor Bellangee noted, "both sides to every controversy are sure to err in a measure and bring in matters that are not pertinent and which impede rather than help to a wise solution."

The controversy that erupted in 1905 failed to go out. Arguments from both residents of Fairhope and outsiders arose criticizing management's economic policies. The central principle of single-tax economic doctrine was that land values belong to the public and should be taken for public use, while that which belongs to individuals should be left sacredly to them. In organizing and administering Fairhope policy, Gaston and the management sought to abide by

this principle; however, controversies continued to raise doubts as to whether Fairhope was achieving its aims.

In understanding the controversies surrounding Fairhope's economic policy, understanding who E. Q. Norton was and his relationship to Fairhope is essential. Residing in Daphne, a town just north of Fairhope, Mr. Edward Quincy Norton aided the Fairhope Industrial Association in its negotiations for land in Baldwin County. Although an advocate of the single tax, Mr. Norton became Fairhope's principal critic; and, because he was the Alabama member of the National Single Tax Committee, his criticisms warranted some weight as an authority. As editor of the Daphne "Standard," Mr. Norton persistently published articles that denounced the Fairhope plan. Facing off over Fairhope's policies, both Gaston as advocate and Norton as antagonist unceasingly rebutted each others' remarks. In two "Fairhope Courier" issues in the summer of 1906, editor Gaston devoted over seven full columns to letters from Norton and replies by himself. Although polite in form, attacks on each others' character were common. When the "Standard" shut down in the spring of 1908, the Courier maintained that "more space was given by Standard to criticism of Fairhope . . . than to the denunciation of the evils of land monopoly existing everywhere outside Fairhope."¹⁸ Although some of Mr. Norton's criticisms may be pertinent, he evinced an obsession just to differ with Fairhope policy.

Contending that Fairhope policy does not represent the single tax, Mr. Norton sees the "prime error of the Fairhope plan, [as] that of shifting rather than abolishing the taxes of our present

system."¹⁹ Strict adherence to single tax doctrine requires the abolition of all taxes beside the tax on land values. Fairhope's management had no power to abolish the county and state taxes on personal property and improvements; however, the Corporation management proposes that the shifting of taxes onto the land rent does abolish the other taxes. Gaston argues that the purpose of the single tax is "to shift the taxes from where they now principally rest upon labor values, to where they belong upon land values."²⁰ Because Fairhope accomplishes this shift, the Fairhope plan achieves the end of abolishing all other taxes. Mr. Norton contends, however, that the Fairhope plan does not realize this shift of burdens because "it is ONLY IN FORM that rents come from land," when in reality the management lumps together the taxes into one sum and "call it rental value of the land."²¹ Therefore, Norton centers the debate on whether the management assesses the true "rental value of the land" or arbitrarily determines the rental values in order to meet expenses.

Norton contends that the only correct method of determining economic rent is "free bidding in an open market under the law of supply and demand."²² Because Fairhope leases its land for 99 years, no bidding can occur. In Fairhope the council considering "conditions in and about Fairhope" makes a tentative assessment, submits it to lessees for comment, reappraises and then submits it to a vote of the membership.²³ Because there is no competition for land in Fairhope, Norton's proposal is useless. Besides the single-tax movement endorses "impartial periodical assessments in their platform of

1893.²⁴ Because "no adequate method of ascertaining land values has ever been adopted," Norton's criticism that management determines the rental value by equalizing total expense to total rent becomes inconsequential. As long as the burden shifts to land values and away from private wealth, the Fairhope plan should work as long as the management conducts the appraisements impartially.

Therefore the whole economic controversy trickle down to the matter of fairness, and this becomes the crux of the controversy. The Fairhope Single Tax Corporation permitted nonmembers to lease colony lands in 1898; however, no constitutional changes were made to incorporate them into the system. Therefore, only a small percentage of the population, the members, have any control over whether assessments are fair and how the Corporation is managed. With no real control over how their economic lives are managed, some lessees begin to question the fairness of the system and the impartiality of the managers and the controversy arises. Another faction arises of both members and nonmembers who are satisfied with the benefits of the system and do not want to see it changed. The question for the Corporation is how to deal with the lessees demands for autonomy and remain secure that the single tax will not falter.

In the spring of 1905, management met the request of nonmember residents for some degree of control over colony affairs with a refusal to acknowledge any rights of control whatsoever. Knocking down any aspirations for more autonomy, Crosbie, a nonmember lessee, reminds the nonmembers that "in no sense are they owners of the land

but simply tenants governed by the terms of their leases, which they voluntarily applied for."²⁵ Alfred Wooster, a framer of the Fairhope Industrial Association's constitution, asserts that the "proposition to give to lessees of the corporation's property the right to vote for corporation officials and determine its policies is wrong--absolutely wrong. . . and if done will sound the death knell of Fairhope as a single tax experiment." Mr. Wooster contends that granting nonmembers an influence in colony affairs is analogous to an orthodox church inviting "atheists to determine its creed."²⁶ One of Fairhope's goals was to apply the single tax and prove that it could work. Antithetical to this goal though was the demand by nonmember residents for political power. Although permitting non-single taxers to lease land, the management feared that these tenants if given a right to vote "would in short order vote the value of the estate into their own pockets." The management wanted to believe that "they were forced to be a landlord in form, but it is not one in reality" because they did not pocket the rent but gave it to the community.²⁷ Fearing nonmember participation in the formation of colony decisions, the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation declared in December of 1905 that "the non-member, lease-holder gets his rights only by virtue of his lease."²⁸

By denying nonmembers political rights the Corporation created a paradox. One faction of the community, the members, lived under an exceptionally democratic constitution. The other faction, the non-members, simply lived under landlordism--no matter how benevolent.

This paradox created a dilemma in Corporation goals that the management would have to solve. One goal was to insure the implementation of the single tax; the other was to "establish and conduct a model community, free from all forms of private monopoly."²⁹ These two views were antithetical because the members had a monopoly on power. Therefore, by insisting that a faction of the residents should have no political rights, the management decided that the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation would become "simply a land company" that would insure the existence of the single tax.³⁰

When the founding members adopted the Fairhope Constitution in 1894, they believed it offered democracy to the fullest extent for it provided for the initiative, referendum, and imperative mandate. Yet by 1906 almost all letters of criticism reiterated that Fairhope was undemocratic. In August of 1905, Mr. Norton believed that Fairhope needed only "to adopt democratic principles to make it an assured success."³¹ The Leaseholders Protective Union chose a committee of five (two members, three not) to revise the constitution because they believed

taxation without representation is wrong in theory and practice and that the unrest, discontent and lack of confidence existing can only be changed by giving the voting power to the resident leaseholder.³²

Confident that the majority shared his view Gaston rebukes these dissidents by claiming that no "degree of democracy [would] remove the opposition of those who want to get something for nothing." Continuing with another character insult, he refers to the objecting leaseholders' actions as "like children of a lesser growth, not only will not play themselves unless they can have their way, but won't

let anybody else play if they can help it."³³ Although a Norton letter prompted these remarks, Gaston does not still the controversy nor instill any respect for himself as a member of the management.

By the following August, Gaston had gained respect for his opposition and accepted that the management would have to yield to some extent to further the single-tax experiment. In 1905, Gaston believed that a majority of lessees, regardless of membership, favor that [Fairhope's} policy;" however, in 1906, he contends that he cannot condone full participation because the "Corporation is engaged in applying a policy to which the great mass of people are either indifferent or positively hostile."³⁴ Refusing earlier to even consider the dissidents' requests, Gaston now offers a token plan for more democracy in the colony. "Believing that it is not practical to amend the Constitution in this particular at this time," Gaston offers the dissidents a resolution that would be endorsed by the members and would give the leaseholders "a vote upon the expenditure of funds."³⁵ He stipulates, however, that the majority of resident members can veto any act that the members determine is inharmonious with the Constitution. Although allowing them to participate, Gaston transfers no real power to them because all actions pass under a review board.

Emphasizing that political and ethical concerns primarily caused the controversy, Arthur Trenholme urges the management to yield to the inevitable extension of democratic power. Trenholme argues that the Corporation

will have to realize sooner or later that there are certain moral obligations, not specified in the leases, between it and the lessees, and that although Democracy was not the first purpose of the founders of Fairhope, that no mere reformation in the method of taxation can ever accomplish anything unless it be founded on the rock of Democracy.³⁶

In his attacks on the political inequities of Fairhope, Trenholme establishes the incompatibility of the current undemocratic condition with the intentions of Henry George when formulating single tax. Trenholme reminds the management that Henry George saw the single tax only as the "remedy, the means to the end" of creating a better, fairer, and more democratic society.³⁷ Exposing the irony of the present conditions with the Corporation's goals, Trenholme cites the anomaly of "a presumably model community where about one-fifth of the members say how affairs shall be run, and the remaining four-fifths have no rights in the colony."³⁸

In the midst of the increasing pressure for more political participation, Gaston and the management received the assurance that they could at least legally maintain their present system. Three lessees--George Fredricks, Paul Dealy, and Horace Dannel--refused to remit their rents and forced the Corporation to take legal action. The defendants contended that the method for determining rent was arbitrary and illegal and that the rentals were inequitable and excessive. The courts, however, sustained the Corporation's suit and directed the defendants to pay the rentals in full. The victory in the courts reinforced Gaston's conviction that the management should maintain control and vindicated "the wisdom of its founders in basing a distinctly ethical undertaking upon a purely business foundation."³⁹ By basing the corporation on a "business foundation,"

Gaston insured the legality of the corporation's power, but legality did not convince the lessees that the Colony was "a distinctly ethical undertaking" because they still lacked any power to control their economic lives.

Although the Corporation remained legally solvent, the objecting leaseholders continued their quest for greater political participation. In October of 1906 having enlisted support from members on a petition, the Leaseholder's Protective Union submitted an amendment to the Constitution to the Executive Council which would require a vote of the membership. The proposal stated that

upon petition of ten percent of the resident leaseholders, in good standing, any act of the Executive Council relating to the disbursement of funds realized from the rentals in excess of the amount necessary for the payment of taxes . . . shall be submitted . . . to a meeting of leaseholders, . . . and the decision of a majority at such meeting shall be final and binding upon the Corporation.⁴⁰

The members failed to ratify the proposed amendment but only because many members believed the amendment did not grant enough power to the lessees. Instead of an amendment only granting lessees a right of referendum, the Progressive League of Fairhope wanted a more radical amendment. The league, therefore, elected a committee of three--Bancroft, Rose, Lyons--to draft a revision to the Constitution.

Although assenting to the need for a revision, Gaston continued to maneuver to delay the adoption of any constitutional amendments. The revision committee presented its report on January 4, 1907. The revised constitution incorporated amendments:

1. To allow all lessees to vote upon the disposition of net rentals
2. Reducing the membership fee from \$100 to \$50
3. Placing public utilities in the hands to the trustees with the power to draw money.⁴¹

At a meeting without debate, the members tabled the revised constitution by a vote of seven to three. The total of only ten votes in a vote that rescinded a revision supported by a majority of residents revealed the degree to which a minority controlled corporation power. A. J. Wolf, a single-taxer member who opposed the Fairhope plan, indicts Gaston for organizing the tabling of the revision. Because "of a total of 135 leases . . . only 45, including the doubtful ones, were single taxers," Gaston declared that "the people cannot be trusted" to run colony affairs. Succeeding in defeating the revision, Gaston now had to battle the alternative proposal which recommended that

whenever seventy-five per cent, or more, of the permanent residents on Fairhope lands shall organize themselves into a responsible corporation for the purpose, the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation may enter into contract with the said corporation, assigning to it all rentals derived from its lands in excess of what is required to pay the taxes which it assumes to pay, to be administered by said corporation in the interest of all people residing on its lands.⁴²

Unable to substitute another proposal, Gaston convinced the membership to refer the proposal to a joint committee of members and lessees to secure a few verbal changes. As chairman of this committee of three members and three nonmembers, Gaston delayed any action on the proposal by not calling a committee meeting for seven months.

Although repeatedly professing a desire for more democracy, Gaston "with the whole matter in his own hands has let it [the proposal] go by default and has never called the committee together."⁴³ With the members ready to allow more political participation, Gaston refused to let the members decide by holding the issue in committee for seven months. Even Bellangee, who had founded the colony with Gaston, could no longer support the political manipulation because "as reformers standing for justice we cannot afford to fail to make good our promises."⁴⁴ Realizing that the political fight enveloping Fairhope was more detrimental than any threat from nonmember participation, Bellangee invokes Gaston to release control because the management cannot clear up "all clouds of suspicion until we take the public fully into our confidence by sharing with it all responsibility."⁴⁵ Reasoning with Gaston that the colony would fair better if run by a democracy of all residents because under control of only a few hands the single tax shoulders the blame for failures, Bellangee contends that if power was dispersed, "the people themselves would bear the blame and democracy rather than the single tax would have to settle the account."⁴⁶

By accusing Gaston of obstructing popular will and Fairhope's progress, Bellangee identifies the conflict as primarily a fight to maintain power. Bellangee asserts that the aim of founding a model community based on the single tax has become subordinate to a political struggle. Exhorting Gaston and the Corporation management to relinquish control of disbursement in order to further the single tax, Bellangee argues that greater participation by nonmembers will

not sacrifice the single tax because "discontent with government comes more from wrong use of taxes, than from methods of taxation."⁴⁷

To Bellangee, personal ambition and control of power are the crux of the conflict, not economic policy. By placing control in the public's hands, Bellangee wants to divorce political and economic aspirations, thereby minimizing the detrimental effects of personal conflicts and maximizing the positive influence of the single tax on economic welfare; subsequently, "men who are ambitions to shine as public servants (or public manipulators) will not complicate their methods whether wise or faulty, with the destinies and merits of Fairhope and the single tax."⁴⁸

Anticipating the adoption of the amendment that was held in committee, Fairhope residents organized the Fairhope Citizens Association on January 25, 1907. This permanent organization would give an authoritative expression of the wishes of all Fairhope's residents not just the members of the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation. At the second meeting of the Fairhope Citizens Association, A. J. Wolf presented resolutions that set up a joint committee to foster cooperation between the Single Tax Corporation and the Citizens Association. Wolf's resolution also proscribed demands that the committee should insist on including "a board of assessors which shall consist of an equal number of Corporation members and non-members lessees" that would fix the rent.^{49*} While dispensing funds did not affect the single tax, this proposition to allow participation of nonmembers

*A full list of the demands can be found in the Appendix

in assessing could alter the administering of the single tax. This new demand may have prompted Gaston's decision to not call a committee meeting on the amendment for seven months. Although he objected to this new demand and delayed the committee meeting, Gaston proposed at this meeting for a committee to be appointed to ascertain the desirability of incorporating as a municipality. Gaston, therefore did not see incorporating as a municipality as much as a threat as Wolf's resolution or the amendment to the Constitution. Although endorsing the incorporation of Fairhope into a municipality inconsistent with Gaston's attempts to retain as much control as possible, it was not. Becoming a municipality did not interfere at all with the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation's rights as a landlord to assess rents. Although the nonmembers were getting a municipality, they would not receive control over the assessment of rents by this action. The commotion caused by the incorporation would most likely distract people from the complaints they had against the Corporation. Additionally, Gaston would have a chance to run for office in the municipal government and, if he won, would be able to even consolidate power more. Therefore, endorsing incorporation was a politically beneficial maneuver.

Encouraged by the "Courier", Fairhope residents decided by a practically unanimous vote to apply for incorporation on September 13, 1907. After several delays caused by problems of getting 25 qualified electors to sign a petition, Fairhope was ready for incorporation. On May 1, 1908 Probate Judge Smith entered Fairhope on the record as a municipality with first elections to be held on May 30.

While Gaston saw his candidacy for mayor as a means to further the Colony's progress by consolidating power, Bellangee perceived it as a potentially explosive mistake. If Gaston and Dr. Greeno, an anti-single-tax advocate, faced off in the mayorial election, the election would become factional and each candidate would "expect to secure the aid of the public in crushing the other."⁵⁰ If Gaston wins, Bellangee believes he will only antagonize those objecting tenants against the municipality because "there is a large element here on whom you [Gaston] can have no influence except to make them oppose even good things that you advocate."⁵¹ Finally, Bellangee believes Greeno will win because Gaston has antagonized so many people in the colony. Although he acknowledges that Gaston is "more devoted to the colony than to anything else," Bellangee informs Gaston that his lack of "tact and sympathy" turns those who ever disagree with him away never to return.⁵² At a citizens' meeting before the election, Mr. Albright, a single taxer, characterizes Gaston's "present zeal for democracy" as "a means for getting further office" and the applause that followed his remarks indicated that Mr. Albright "had a considerable following in his personal attack."⁵³

Disregarding Bellangee's warnings, Gaston ran for the office of mayor. On May 30, 1908, in Fairhope's first municipal election, the citizens elected Dr. H. S. Greeno as mayor by a vote of 21 to 19. The votes of four prominent single taxers--Bellangee, Pilcher, Wolf, and Albright--for Dr. Greeno were crucial in Gaston's loss.

Proposing theories requires just thought, implementing theories requires action and decisions that affect others. People are much more likely to respond to actions that influence their lives than thoughts which do not. Gaston had seen cooperative colonies fail because despite all the good thought, human nature did not respond well to the implementation of that thought. Fairhope would be different though. Gaston had taken into account the propensity of people only to act in their own interest. The single-tax economic policy revolved around that fact. Fairhope's constitution specified that people kept "the full reward of individual efforts." In addition, the constitution promised "equality of opportunity" because of no individual ownership of land and no private monopolies--each person would have a "fair hope" for prospering. Besides all this, the single tax stipulated that "land values belong to the public"; therefore any of the rent remaining from tax payment would be expanded to benefit the entire community. Gaston's plan for a model community based on reason and human nature, "fair hope" for all should have worked. He thought it would. Since 1905, however, disharmony had pervaded colony affairs, and the crusader of Fairhope, deserted by his cohort Bellangee, lost the first municipal election to a non-single taxer. Either the plan or Gaston had failed to anticipate all the problems.

Gaston had anticipated man's selfishness in the economic world and accounted for it in the constitution; however, he failed to transfer this human trait of self-interest to the political sphere. The admission of nonmembers accelerated the demise of the cooperation

spirit that held together a community controlled by idealists. Gaston believed that the economic benefits that the leaseholders' received would appease them until they accepted the single tax and became members, but he was mistaken. Although the management expended all funds after paying taxes for the leaseholders' mutual benefit, the tenants were still only tenants, and a small corporation of members were a collective landlord. No matter how beneficent, the landlord kept control of all decisions.

In antithesis to the quest for more democracy was E. B. Gaston's character. He had yearned to found a colony and did so. He had based the colony's goals on utopian standards. He was an idealist who devoted his life to practising his convictions. Having won his first political struggle but simultaneously losing national acceptance, Gaston became Fairhope's crusader. In order to persevere, he relied on himself and therefore Fairhope's policies became his and his views Fairhope's.

But in 1905 conflicts had erupted. Nonmembers and members criticized Corporation policy and lack of democracy. Convinced of his economic policy's correctness, Gaston refused to accept any criticism. He became

so sure of [his] own good intentions that he does not stop to weigh [his] policies and be sure of their wisdom, but he cannot see how one can differ with [him] and be just right in either intentions or judgement.⁵⁴

According to Bellangee, he refused to relinquish control "for fear all the rest would act the fool or traitor."⁵⁵ Therefore he continued to retain control despite the antagonism he fostered. He followed that Progressive belief that government administered by experts

could solve all the problems. He did not always recognize that the fight to preserve the existing management may be more detrimental to the colony's progress than any change in management could be. He had lost sight of his aims in the fight to retain control.

The constitution promised the lessees equal opportunity, but they wanted more opportunity. Everyone looks to better their advantage over others. Gaston and the management monopolized all political opportunity. Therefore, when economic opportunity lagged, the tenants protested their lack of political opportunity. The protest impeded further economic progress because prospective colonists were driven away, and consequently the tenants increased their political protests. A self-defeating cycle resulted. Either Gaston and management would have to relinquish political opportunity or provide more economic progress. When the management failed to do either, people could care less about equal opportunity.

ENDNOTES

- ¹Fairhope Industrial Association Constitution, Article II.
- ²Minutes, July 13, 1897.
- ³Minutes, July 13, 1897.
- ⁴Fairhope Courier, January 27, 1905.
- ⁵Minutes, June 20, 1898.
- ⁶Minutes, August 9, 1897.
- ⁷Minutes, September 26, 1898.
- ⁸Courier, January 27, 1905.
- ⁹Courier, January 27, 1905.
- ¹⁰Courier, January 27, 1905.
- ¹¹Courier, January 27, 1905.
- ¹²Courier, January 27, 1905.
- ¹³Courier, January 27, 1905.
- ¹⁴Courier, January 27, 1905.
- ¹⁵Courier, January 27, 1905.
- ¹⁶Courier, March 3, 1905.
- ¹⁷Courier, March 3, 1905.
- ¹⁸Courier, March 6, 1908.
- ¹⁹Courier, July 13, 1906.
- ²⁰Courier, November 22, 1907.
- ²¹Courier, November 22, 1907.
- ²²Daphne Standard, November 1, 1907.
- ²³Courier, November 22, 1907.
- ²⁴Standard, September 13, 1907.
- ²⁵Courier, September 22, 1905.

- ²⁶Courier, February 3, 1905.
- ²⁷Courier, March 10, 1905.
- ²⁸Courier, December 1, 1905
- ²⁹Fairhope Single Tax Corporation Constitution, Article II.
- ³⁰Courier, March 10, 1905.
- ³¹Courier, August 25, 1905.
- ³²Courier, August 18, 1905.
- ³³Courier, August 25, 1905.
- ³⁴Courier, August 25, 1905; August 10, 1906.
- ³⁵Courier, August 17, 1906.
- ³⁶Courier, September 21, 1906.
- ³⁷Courier, September 21, 1906.
- ³⁸Courier, September 21, 1906.
- ³⁹Courier, January 4, 1907.
- ⁴⁰Courier, October 5, 1906.
- ⁴¹Standards, August 9, 1907.
- ⁴²Standards, September 13, 1907.
- ⁴³Standards, September 13, 1907.
- ⁴⁴Standards, September 13, 1907.
- ⁴⁵Standards, September 13, 1907.
- ⁴⁶Standards, September 13, 1907.
- ⁴⁷Standards, September 13, 1907.
- ⁴⁸Standards, September 13, 1907.
- ⁴⁹Courier, February 8, 1907.
- ⁵⁰Correspondence, J. Bellangee to EBG, May 11, 1908.
- ⁵¹Correspondence, May 12, 1908.

⁵²Correspondence, May 12, 1908.

⁵³Courier, May 22, 1908.

⁵⁴Correspondence, J. Bellangee, May 12, 1908.

⁵⁵Correspondence, May 12, 1908.

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APPENDIX

Proposal By A. J. Wolf to Fairhope Citizens' Association

February 8, 1907

Resolved, that the committee from this Association be instructed to present and to insist upon the following demands:

1. Every person over eighteen years of age who shall have resided on Corporation land for twelve months next preceding any colony election, to have the right to vote for colony officers and upon colony affairs, but not for Corporation officers nor upon the management of the Corporation.
2. The Corporation to deliver to the colony government, when the same shall be organized, the total revenue derived from land values and ground rents, after deducting ten per cent of the gross revenue therefrom, and the amount paid of state and county taxes of the Corporation and its lessees.
3. The colony government to be put in possession and to have exclusive charge and control of all public utilities and improvements and of the collection and expenditure of all income therefrom; to have an equal voice with the Corporation in locating highways, sidewalks and parks, and to have exclusive control and direction of all matters usually committed to the government of incorporated towns.
4. Ground rents of Corporation land to be determined annually by a board of assessors which shall consist of an equal number of Corporation members and non-member lessees. Any disagreement of such board to be decided by an arbitrator chosen by the board, who shall preside at its meetings.
5. The colony government to have power to borrow money by pledging as security for the loan the tangible assets of any public utility, the money so obtained to be devoted entirely to the particular utility which has been pledged; but no franchise of any character or for any period of time shall be granted.