

Fairhope and the Single Tax Movement:
the First Ten Years

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History Thesis
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December 2, 1982

In January 1904 the Dalton, Georgia, Herald sent the single tax colony of Fairhope a congratulatory note, hailing its ability to thrive "amid the storms of blind opposition for a decade."¹ The first ten years of the Colony's existence were indeed tumultuous. In addition to facing a great deal of local skepticism and suspicion, the colonists were forced to contend with opposition on the part of many prominent single taxers, who for various reasons chose not to support the Colony effort. This lack of support by recognized leaders of the movement caused great frustration and embitterment in Fairhope. In mid 1905, during a period of national exposure and vigorous criticism, the Colony newspaper, the Courier, expressed this sentiment: "Isn't it a little too hard on Fairhope single taxers that in addition to fighting for the single tax against the world, the flesh and the devil, they have the guns of single taxers turned against them."² With the advantage of almost ten years of perspective James Bellangee, founding member and prominent Colony spokesman, echoed this theme in the Single Tax Review: "Not the least discouraging condition with which we had to contend was the apathy and in some cases the opposition of leading single taxers."³ It is the aim of this essay to examine the relationship between Fairhope and outside elements of the single tax movement during the first decade of the Colony's existence. The evolution of Fairhope's policies toward the single tax movement will be emphasized and observations will be made concerning responses which these policies elicited. In order to understand the attitudes of single taxers toward Fairhope it is first necessary to examine prevailing

opinions of national single tax leaders regarding the most effective line of pursuit to popularize the single tax.

It is extremely problematic to speak of the "National Single Tax Movement." As Arthur Young writes in his 1916 ^{history} documentation of the movement, "there has never been an active, continuing national single tax organization in the United States."⁴ Following the death of Henry George, the political economist who developed the single tax doctrine, various reknowned single tax leaders emerged and promoted various strategies by which the single tax would be realized. None, however, spoke with the authority of George. Appealing to George's writings for authority was not always sufficient because George refrained from outlining precise methods of application. The major split within the movement occurred between those advocating the "single tax unlimited" and the proponents of the "single tax limited." Without delving into the depths of the controversy, the issue turned on the question of whether the entire land value should be taken irrespective of governmental needs (unlimited) or merely the value that is required to maintain government at a reasonable level (limited). This controversy divided the movement along ideological lines and stood as an obstacle in the way of a united national movement.⁵

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There were other differences of opinion within the single tax movement concerning the most effective way to popularize the single tax. One such disagreement arose between advocates of immediate political activism and those who believed an exhaustive educational campaign must proceed legislative activity. Henry George believed that at that time the best work could be done under the umbrella of

the Democratic Party. Advocating a gradualist approach, George proposed that tariff reform and other tax revisions would ultimately lead to the single tax.⁶ An adjunct to this policy of political activism on a national level was promoted by Thomas G. Shearman. Calling for local option legislation, or "home rule," Shearman aimed at the gradual elimination of municipal and state taxes on personal property, while simultaneously raising assessments on land.⁷ With this emphasis on legislative reform, the political arm of the single tax movement was not disposed to look favorably upon the enclave idea. Fairhope was criticized by outside elements of the movement for "running away from the larger fight for the Single Tax."⁸ The "larger fight" as these single taxers perceived it would not be appreciably assisted by an isolated demonstration of single tax principles.

The other major element in the movement, the propaganda or educational wing, was somewhat more eager to look upon Fairhope as a potentially instructive instrument. The propagandists criticized attempts at legislative reform for being premature, citing examples such as the "Delaware campaign" in which over \$40,000 was expended for the 1896 election, garnering a mere 3% vote for single tax candidates.⁹ Charles B. Fillebrown, a nationally prominent single taxer and a leading advocate of the printing press, asserted that "if any one thing is prominently in evidence, it is the formal combination of the single tax with political action and methods has been uniformly disastrous to the single tax."¹⁰ Fairhope did receive encouraging correspondence from propaganda associations, who recognized the value of a small scale single tax demonstration. The Single Tax Propaganda Association of

Washington, D.C. wrote, "It is with such fearless, enterprising people as you that we want to keep in closest touch. With such as you lie our greatest hope."¹¹ Remarks like this were surely gratifying to Fairhoppers in the early years of their struggle, which seemed otherwise to be largely unappreciated by their brethren.

A substantial portion of opposition to Fairhope can be directly attributed to a widely publicized quote by Henry George, stating that "the single tax cannot be fairly tried on a small scale in a community not subject to the single tax."¹² The damage done to Fairhope by this statement cannot be precisely determined, but it is a fair assumption that many conservative, doctrinaire Georgists opposed the colony idea on principle. It seems that unaffiliated single taxers were more inclined to support the cooperative idea than ~~mere~~ ^{were} single tax clubs, of which there were many at the turn of the century. A letter written to the Colony secretary in 1894 from an interested single taxer in California supports this generalization: "There are in Los Angeles a large number of men and women deeply interested in cooperation. The Single Tax Club, however, as a body, does not favor any undertaking of colonizing."¹³ This opposition by the club, "as a body", may be explained, in part, by the generalization that institutions are by nature more doctrinaire and conservative than the population they represent. For the Los Angeles club to endorse the colony idea, it would first have to break from the generally accepted consensus that the single tax could not be fairly demonstrated on a small scale.

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Other single taxers opposed the Fairhope plan for more practical and less ideological reasons. Believing that the movement could not

sustain the negative publicity of an unsuccessful single tax experiment, they chose to dissociate themselves and the movement from Fairhope.

Bolton Hall, a prominent New York single taxer, wrote to Ernest B. Gaston, the Colony Secretary and the Courier's editor, in 1894, admitting that he was "not very hopeful of your enterprise. I do not believe that, in our present state of barbarism a communal store can actually live in competition with individually managed enterprises."¹⁴

Doubting Fairhope's chances of success and wishing to avoid a negative reflection upon George's theories, Hall admonished that "Single Taxers can engage in more effective work just now, than in any experiment..."¹⁵

This type of critic of Fairhope, the pragmatic or perhaps pessimistic single taxer, was also a potential supporter of the Colony if the grounds for his doubt could be removed. Indeed, Bolton Hall eventually became a valued supporter of the Colony once he was convinced of its likelihood of success.¹⁶

The disunity within the single tax movement was a complicating factor with which Fairhope was forced to deal. Yet this factionalization ultimately proved to be to the Colony's advantage. There existed no "party line" enunciated by an authoritative national organization. Given George's opinion on small scale demonstrations, a national organ of the single tax would in all likelihood have condemned the ~~endeavor~~ **enclave** idea. Even with the existence of nationally prominent detractors, there was no wholesale ~~denatation~~ **alienation** of Fairhope. The strength of the movement, particularly for Fairhope, lay in individual followers of the single tax, many of whom were not afiliated with any national or local single tax organizations. Therefore, Fairhope was always able

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to seek out sympathetic supporters of their effort. The major problem facing the Colony was how to reach these potential supporters.

In the early days of Fairhope's cooperative experiment the only major contact with the outside single tax movement was through the Colony newspaper, the Courier. The Colony confidently saw the major obstacle to its acceptance as lack of publicity. Once news of Fairhope's contribution to the movement was publicized, assistance to the effort would be forthcoming. The Courier filled the vital role of Colony publicist, promoting Fairhope to the rest of the world. E. B. Gaston recognized the unique nature of his publication, stating, "the Courier is not claimed to be a newspaper in the ordinary sense, but it is published especially in the interest of Fairhope."¹⁷ Gaston did not claim objectivity in matters affecting the Colony; he did, however, insist upon the full and honest representation of the facts. Gaston realized that the Courier's function toward the outside world was basically twofold: to educate and to recruit. The Courier filled its educational role by familiarizing its readership with single tax theory and its simulation in Fairhope. Early issues are marked with frequent reprints of the Colony Constitution as well as an article by Gaston entitled "Cooperative Individualism," which set forth the Colony's perception of the proper balance between the community and the individual.¹⁸ The Courier also actively sought to increase Fairhope's membership by encouraging migration to the bayfront colony. Frequent

descriptions of Fairhope's topography, agricultural potential and commercial possibilities appear in the newspaper, making it appear at times as a travel brochure in the interest of the single tax colony. In order for these goals to be realized, a dramatic increase in circulation was required. A wider circulation would not only increase the number of single taxers likely to migrate to the Colony; it would contribute to a broader base of support for the Fairhope plan.

Gaston undertook an aggressive campaign to "Put Fairhope to the Front," mainly through distribution of the Courier.¹⁹ In 1896, following William Jennings Bryan's disappointing loss to McKinley, the Courier took solace in the realization that frustrated reformers would now be able to increase their efforts on behalf of successful reform activities, such as Fairhope. The Courier noted that this "sentiment is one which should be taken advantage of by all friends of Fairhope to put our undertaking before those who are likely to desire a part in it."²⁰ The best way to put Fairhope into the limelight was naturally by extending the readership of the Courier. Gaston sent letters to over one hundred outside friends of the Colony soliciting financial assistance and suggesting alternatives which would be equally valuable to Fairhope. Among the alternatives cited were: distribution of ~~excess~~^{extra} issues of the Courier, publishing articles on Fairhope in local newspapers, or reading articles to local single tax clubs.²¹ Gaston published editorials directly addressing single tax editors, promising to "reciprocate as far as possible any assistance you may render to us ... by mention of Fairhope in your columns."²² Bundles of recent newspapers were mailed

Do we have any idea of how many clubs there were and how many members - say in the 1890s?

to as many single tax clubs as could be located with requests to distribute them at meetings.²³ This aggressive marketing campaign began to pay dividends as more subscriptions to the Courier were received in August 1898 than in any previous month.²⁴

One particular target of Fairhope's publicity campaign, the Chicago Single Tax Club, expressed unprecedented interest in the Colony. On May 14, 1897, the Chicago Club voted to hold a Fourth of July picnic, the proceeds ~~being~~^{to be} donated to Fairhope. The Courier published this gratifying news in a banner headline, citing it as "perhaps the most important event in the history of Fairhope."²⁵ The news was especially encouraging to the Colony because it was unsolicited. Fairhope had from its inception followed a policy of not seeking the endorsement of single tax organizations, recognizing "the prejudice in the minds of many single taxers against colony efforts"²⁶. This action, initiated by one of the strongest, most prestigious clubs in the nation, was received by the Colony as an endorsement of the Fairhope plan. Unfortunately, the euphoria was to be shortlived.

Clarence Moeller, a member of the Chicago Club, was initially the chief promoter of the fundraiser. From the outset, though, his correspondences^g with Gaston exhibited skepticism about the legal standing of the Colony. On June 3, Moeller proposed reorganization of Fairhope as a municipal corporation.²⁷ Reincorporation of the Colony under Alabama law was not an idea alien to Fairhope's leaders. It had, in fact, been contemplated since the founding of the Fairhope Industrial Association under Iowa statute. Moeller's further suggestion of renaming the Colony, "Alabama City", must certainly have been received by Gaston

as an imposition upon Fairhope.²⁸ Subsequent letters revealed Moeller's desire to "stand Fairhope squarely on the single tax unlimited foundation."²⁹ Although Moeller did not elaborate upon his meaning here, it can be surmised that he doubted the validity of Fairhope's method of taking the economic rent of land. In the single tax "unlimited" versus "limited" controversy mentioned previously, Moeller was an advocate of the former. He went so far as to suggest his own method of rent assessment to Fairhope to insure that the full economic value would be taken. This "most obnoxious" condition, as Gaston called it, would have made all Colony landholdings subject to a competitive bidding system.³⁰

If an occupying tenant chose not to match a proposed bid, he would be forced to leave the property. *But FBG was an "unlimited" man - believed in taking all the rent.*

The implications of the fundraising weekend were significantly broadened when Moeller "converted" George Hampton, editor of the National Single Taxer to the colony idea (as Moeller perceived it). Moeller secured a promise from Hampton that "if Fairhoppers will make Fairhope a single tax colony on the basis of my (Moeller's) letter ... the National Single Taxer will boom Fairhope with enthusiastic support."³¹ Fairhope now had one of the most powerful single tax clubs in the movement, as well as the nation's chief single tax publication, poised to offer ringing endorsements of their effort. It was clear, however, that these endorsements would not come without a price. As the holiday weekend approached, Gaston's enthusiasm must surely have waned with the realization that Fairhope's integrity as an autonomous colony was on the line.

Gaston was met in Chicago with more discouraging news. J. H. Springer, a Colony dissident who had ^{recently} left Fairhope several years earlier,

*less than 2 yrs
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had written the Chicago Club warning it of the fraudulent nature of the Fairhope plan. Springer claimed that Fairhope's incorporation would not hold up in court, since it was invalidated when the Association left Iowa. This would result, Springer suggested, in the total loss of all capital invested in the Colony. Springer cast further aspersions upon the character of Fairhope's leadership, noting that Gaston's half sister, Dr. Clara Atkinson, owned deeded land within the Colony landholdings. Springer intimated that when the Association was dissolved, this deeded landholding in the heart of town would afford the Gaston family a tidy speculative profit.³² In the Courier, Gaston noted Springer's "heroic effort" to undermine the weekend, proposing that his "mis-statements" were answered to "the expressed satisfaction of all"³³. It is clear, though, that if Springer was personally discredited, he did succeed in planting sufficient doubt in the minds of enough club members to poison the cooperative effort.

As Gaston reported upon his return to the Colony, "it was but a short time before various important changes in our plans were suggested."³⁴ The first was the previously mentioned suggestion to reorganize as a municipal corporation. The Chicago Club rendered this potentially acceptable measure unacceptable by calling also for the elimination of the one hundred dollar membership fee.³⁵ The next condition was "Moeller's absurd plan" of competitive bidding for Colony land. When Moeller's proposition was flatly refused he changed from being (Fairhope's) chief advocate to a bitter opponent.³⁶ Gaston recognized that matters were not moving in Fairhope's favor. Additionally, the financial potential of the picnic had been greatly

some truth to this. Dr. A. said she had to look after Ethel and she felt the colony might fail

overemphasized. Attendance at the event barely allowed the club to meet its expenses. Gaston attributed the poor attendance to the frustrating fact that "a majority of the club members are not even in favor of the colony idea."³⁷

Gaston returned to Fairhope publicly expressing confidence that the trip was "certain to be eventually productive of good."³⁸ Although the weekend failed miserably to meet the Colony's expectations, Gaston seemed to genuinely believe that it might ultimately be a productive venture. He continued to correspond with Hiram B. Loomis, President of the CSTC, concerning the question of a club endorsement. The tenor of these letters was initially one of mutual accomodation. Loomis saw the legal matter as the primary hurdle in the path of an endorsement.³⁹ As has been mentioned, Gaston was not averse to a reincorporation that would strengthen the Colony's legal foundation. In fact, in the September 1 issue of the Courier, Gaston announced the formation of a special committee to look into the reorganization issue. While recognizing "no necessity for amending or reorganizing" the Colony structure, the Courier did note the benefit of giving "added assurance to our friends outside."⁴⁰ Thus, there appeared to be a flexibility and a willingness to compromise on the legal question.

Loomis also desired a satisfactory resolution of the Atkinson landholding matter, before a club endorsement could be offered. Loomis strongly urged that Fairhope obtain an option on Atkinson's land, thereby eliminating any appearance of wrong.⁴¹ Gaston, however, felt that the matter was of a personal nature and refused to allow it to be negotiated publicly. Loomis vehemently expressed his displeasure

with the Colony's "indifference," suggesting that people are "beginning to smell around for a nigger in the woodpile."⁴² Gaston was not willing to compromise the integrity of Fairhope's personal affairs any more than he was willing to relinquish the Colony's autonomy in deciding how Fairhope should be run. Therefore, the question of a Chicago endorsement was put to rest.

You give considerable emphasis to the Atkinson level-holding controversy. Potential here for great drama: FB loses O.S.T. endorsement because he shields his sister who is, or may be, speculating!

At this point it is unlikely that Gaston, or the Colony as a whole, was surprised at the ultimate resolution of the controversy with the Chicago Single Tax Club. As the Colony, pointed out in a resolution to the CSTC, "the Fairhope Industrial Association has never asked, and does not now ask the endorsement or aid of this organization..."⁴³

The irony of the situation lies in the fact that Fairhope anticipated this type of problem with conservative institutions within the movement, and consciously avoided soliciting endorsements of this nature. The unfortunate controversy with the CSTC served to reinforce Fairhope's previously held attitude toward single tax clubs in general.

If the outcome of Fairhope's relationship with the Chicago Club was not unanticipated, it was, nonetheless, bitterly disappointing. Three years of arduous struggle had failed to produce one substantial vote of confidence from the recognized leadership of the single tax movement. The Courier's initial description of the picnic as the most important event in the Colony's early history indicates the hunger that Fairhope felt for outside recognition. The Chicago experience convinced the Colony that any support it may receive would not come from the conservative element of the national movement. James Bellangee's letters to Gaston in early 1898 reveal the depth of the Colony's disappointment.

I believe the Des Moines club remained loyal to you know?

yes

Bellangee wrote that there "is so much of the jingo about most people that they cannot do any thing unless it is on a large scale."⁴⁴

Bellangee's disenchantment with the general movement appeared in his increasing belief that "Fairhope must not depend upon outside help to any great extent. Those that give want to boss."⁴⁵ Speaking of his efforts to spread knowledge of Fairhope's contribution, Bellangee likened it to "walking through a crowd of blind fools."⁴⁶ Bellangee recommended to Gaston that what Fairhope needed was "men who have got tired with the outside world and will cast in their lot with us there."⁴⁷ It is apparent that the Chicago Club controversy had contributed to a critical low point in Fairhope's early history. Judging from the growing disillusionment in Bellangee's letters during 1898, there appeared to be a danger that the Colony's frustration with elements of the outside movement might be translated into (intro-
version.)

If there was an identifiable turning point in Fairhope's relationship with outside single tax elements, it likely occurred at the end of 1898. For the greater part of the year the Courier had vigorously encouraged donations to the Colony's Single Tax Land Fund. Fairhope owned an option on 320 acres of valuable bayfront property which was to expire at the end of 1898. By mid December the Colony had received a mere \$85 of the \$385 required to exercise the option. With most of the subscriptions coming from local residents and non-resident members, the possibility of a successful purchase seemed remote.⁴⁸ A late December rush of subscriptions to the Land Fund enabled the Colony to exercise its option on the coveted land. The Courier reported that

"the darkest hour proved to be just before the dawn."⁴⁹ The successful land purchase was of great significance to Fairhope, not merely because it extended the Colony's boundaries, but also because it was made possible by substantial assistance from previously unrecognized sources, sympathetic to the colony effort. A relatively unpublicized factor in the eleventh hour rush proved to be of deeper and longerlasting importance to the Colony. A one hundred dollar membership fee, designated toward the land purchase, was sent by Joseph Fels, a nationally prominent single taxpayer, and philanthropist of great means.⁵⁰

The potential importance of Fels' friendship with Fairhope was probably not immediately appreciated. It did not take long, however, for Fels to demonstrate his desire, as well as his capacity, to aid the Colony. In April 1899 Fels wrote to Secretary Gaston, promising to pay all shelving costs of Fairhope's new library, as well as advancing from \$200-500 toward the establishment of a Colony telephone system.⁵¹ The next two issues of the Courier reported this news in prominent fashion, noting what a pleasure it was to accept the munificence of "such a friend" as Mr. Fels.⁵² Fels apparently was displeased with this publicity, writing to Gaston that he was "not looking for notoriety of this kind," and requesting ~~that~~ a more discreet handling of his relationship with Fairhope.⁵³ Fels' enthusiasm for the Colony was not diminished by the zealous publicity given to his assistance. He soon tendered a further offer of \$200 toward the completion of Fairhope's water system. This offer was to be paid back in ten dollar installments over a twenty month period, with Fairhope including "the legal six percent interest" in any way she wished. In this manner, Fels' desire

to keep the relationship "on a business basis" would be satisfied.⁵⁴ It is clear that Fels felt no compulsion to draw a strict line between his reformist impulses and his business dealings. While negotiating the terms of his assistance with Gaston, Fels sought out Fairhope's major retail store, Mershon Brothers, through which he could market Fels-Naptha soap, the generating source of his fortune.⁵⁵ By January 1, 1900, Mershon Brothers had received a shipment of Fels' soap, which the Courier reported was available for free sampling.⁵⁶ This association of Fels' business dealings with this philanthropic activity might provide an insight into why Fels was so guarded in his desire for public recognition. It would be absurd to argue that he made these sizable contributions to Fairhope, in order to gain a foothold for his soap products. Yet, since the business element was undeniably a part of the relationship, Fels probably desired to minimize the personal recognition he received. *see C. Purcell for alternative explanation*

Following the unprecedented generosity of Fels' early contact with Fairhope, the Courier recognized the Philadelphia philanthropist as "one of the willing and able friends so much and long desired."⁵⁷ Fels did indeed seem to epitomize the benefactor that Fairhope had so desperately needed. The financial benefit of his friendship was only a part of the entire picture. His recognition and endorsement of the Fairhope plan meant a great deal coming from a national leader of the single tax movement. In spite of his tendency to avoid the glorification of his activities on behalf of Fairhope, Fels was to become an ardent and aggressive defender of the Colony in single tax circles.⁵⁸ Of equal importance to the Colony, particularly after the embittering dispute

with the Chicago Single Tax Club, was that Fels had no inclination to impose his will upon Fairhope's local affairs. There were virtually no strings attached to Fels' generosity. He vested great confidence in the personal integrity of Fairhope's leadership, particularly Gaston, with whom he dealt directly. About as close as Fels would come to offering advice was suggesting to the membership the industry of raising Belgian hares, noting that it had become "quite a craze in California."⁵⁹ On another occasion, after visiting the Colony, Fels went so far as to point out the value in "keeping tin cans and other unsightly debris off our streets ..., painting our buildings and building wherever possible more artistic and permanent structures."⁶⁰ Fairhope had, in Joseph Fels, found its ideal benefactor; enthusiastic, generous in his support, and quite content to allow the colonists to maintain autonomy over local matters. *He did offer advice - sometimes forcibly.*

The year 1900 represents a turning point of sorts in Fairhope's policy toward the outside single tax movement. Previously, the Courier's dominant role had been to trumpet the successes of the Colony, encouraging a broader base of support. This remained the primary function of the paper after 1900, but it is evident that the Courier began to play an expanded role. In the early years of publication, the newspaper had been relatively quiet about single tax activities outside of Fairhope. When actions were noted, the Courier was encouraging and supportive of the effort.⁶¹ It is likely that Gaston believed this type of uncritical publicity would be reciprocated by other sectors of the movement. By 1900, though, Fairhope had received very little unsolicited publicity or financial aid from the recognized quarters of

the single tax movement. Beginning with the election of 1900, the Courier played a more assertive role in editorializing about national single tax policies.

In the summer of 1900, the Courier endorsed William Jennings Bryan and the Democratic platform. Bryan's policies of free coinage, abolition of the National Banking System and payment of the national debt were accepted in Fairhope as the most ambitious reforms possible under the prevailing political atmosphere.⁶² Believing that a "vote for the Republican electors is a vote for the repeal of the Declaration of Independence", the Courier was obliged to embrace the Democratic Party.⁶³ When the Chicago Single Tax Club organized a Single Tax Party in Cook County, Illinois, the Courier harshly criticized the move. The Courier published a prominent editorial pointing out the Chicago Club's mistake and declaring that the action would "~~regard~~^{retard}, rather than hasten, the ultimate triumph of the Single Tax."⁶⁴ The editorial (proselytized) to the CSTC that there must logically be two steps involved in political victory: education and action. The CSTC was premature in its belief that Cook County had passed the educational phase. The Courier identified the present problem as how best to educate non-single taxers, closing the editorial with Fairhope's unparalleled value in this role.⁶⁵ It was undoubtedly cathartic for Fairhope to express its disapproval of the Chicago Club action. The editorial, however, represented more than a last word to the CSTC. It marked the Courier's emerging role as a confident and candid commentator on the activities of the single tax movement. ?

In May of 1902, the Courier published a particularly assertive statement of Fairhope's accomplishments, pointing to the lack of an equal effort on the part of the rest of the single tax movement. The Courier declared Fairhope no longer an "experiment, but a success with over seven years of continual growth."⁶⁶ Considering Fairhope's value as a demonstration of the single tax, the editorial expressed disappointment that "single taxers generally have given the colony very little encouragement either financially or morally." The article proceeded to make an aggressive suggestion as to what single taxers could, and should do, to assist Fairhope. For those unable to join Fairhope the Courier suggested giving the Colony "as much as you can afford" to be applied to the purchase of land. Other suggestions were to purchase land giving an option to Fairhope, and designate the Colony as a beneficiary in one's will.⁶⁷ The editorial played a dual role. On one hand it brought attention to the Colony's successes and suggested tangible ways to further it; it also, however, represented a forceful indictment of the general apathy within the national single tax movement.

In the ensuing years the Courier confirmed its newfound assertiveness, voicing the Colony's opinion of single tax efforts. In the summer of 1903 the paper commented that the Toronto Single Tax Club had spent \$1300 during the year for lectures. How much more effective, the Courier asked, would this money have been were it used to secure land for Fairhope.⁶⁸ Another 1903 editorial focused on "Fairhope as a Propaganda Force." Editor Gaston focused on the heavy investment in the "Delaware Campaign" of 1896, in which over \$40,000 secured a mere 3% of the vote. Gaston contrasted this dismal failure with the success of

Right on!

Fairhope. Aside from the Fairhope steamer and the Colony wharf, only \$6,500 had been invested in Fairhope in over eight years of successful demonstration of single tax principles. Gaston proposed that giving money for literature or lectures was like "casting bread upon waters, which may return after many days, but probably will not."⁶⁹

The more assertive role taken by the Courier was paralleled by a more active and direct strategy of soliciting financial assistance from the single tax movement. Prior to the turn of the century, the reach of Fairhope's publicity corresponded almost directly with the Courier's circulation. As mentioned above, the Courier undertook a vigorous circulation drive to put Fairhope into the forefront of the reform movement, but there was virtually no other major point of contact between the Colony and the general movement. While circulation increased, material assistance lagged behind. Close calls such as the near failure to exercise the land option at the end of 1898 (made possible by Fels' last minute contribution), probably contributed to a feeling that innovations were necessary if Fairhope were to reach its goals.

The most noticeable change in Fairhope's strategy of soliciting aid was the policy of sending a Colony "missionary" to single tax strongholds, usually in the urban northeast. In February 1901, Secretary Gaston embarked on such a trip in the interest of the Colony in general, but particularly to encourage subscriptions to Fairhope's boat fund.⁷¹ The Colony had taken on the task of building a steamer which would make regular runs between Fairhope and Mobile, facilitating passage to the single tax community. Gaston spent the majority of his trip in and

around the New York area, meeting with many prominent single taxers. To his disappointment, though, the only financial assistance was a \$200 subscription from Ernest H. Crosby.⁷² Gaston's purpose was not solely to raise funds for the steamer. While in New York, Gaston met M. H. Ramage, the Secretary of the National Single Tax Propaganda Association. Ramage organized several speeches by Gaston and directed him toward many single taxers, allowing him to acquaint these potential supporters with "Fairhope as a ... practical effort to show a better economic way, by right doing."⁷³ The great deal of exposure given to Fairhope insured the success of Gaston's trip. The financial rewards, however, were not as great as might have been expected. The boat project ultimately did reach of successful conclusion, due primarily to Joseph Fels' \$2200 in contributions, representing over two-thirds of the expenses.⁷⁴

James Bellangee undertook several similar excursions on behalf of Fairhope, and proved to be a much more successful fundraiser. The most successful of his efforts was an exhausting nine month trip during 1903 which brought the Colony \$2,741.25 in contributions to the Land Fund.⁷⁵ Perhaps as important to the Colony as the financial benefit of the trip, was the inestimable publicity which Fairhope received. Bellangee spoke to such groups as the Henry George Club of Philadelphia, the Manhattan Liberal League, the Brooklyn Single Tax Club, and the Women's National Single Tax Conference at New Haven, expounding upon the Colony's virtues and converting untold single taxers to the Fairhope plan.⁷⁶ In addition to speaking directly to single tax loyalists, Bellangee secured publicity for the Colony in dozens of local newspapers. He commented in the Courier

how many,
really?

that "wherever I go the columns of the newspapers are open to my story of Fairhope."⁷⁷ Bellangee confidently predicted that "by September Fairhope will be the best advertised place in the South."⁷⁸ These extremely promising reports from Fairhope's ambassador in the North prompted the Courier to remark in the ninth year of the Colony experiment that "never in all its history has the future of Fairhope seemed so bright."⁷⁹ *Yes, but FBG was always an optimist*

The Colony did not rest content with the visibility it received during Bellangee's trip. While on his campaign, Bellangee wrote to the Courier suggesting the publication of an illustrated booklet about the Colony which would give "full exposition of our experiment".⁸⁰ It is likely that Bellangee recognized the valuable support that a visual record of the Colony could give to his fundraising efforts. By April 1904 the Courier announced its intention to publish a 32 page illustrated handbook, noting that the need had long been felt, but only now could the Courier justify its expense.⁸¹ By August the booklet had been completed and was available for a mere ten cents per copy. The Colony brochure would prove to be a valuable supplement to the Courier, as well as a concise and convincing summary of Fairhope's progress.

It is doubtful that Fairhoppers in 1905 believed that the Colony had received recognition commensurate with its achievement. Aside from a resolution of "greeting and encouragement" from the Women's National Single Tax Conference in 1902, Fairhope received no official recognition by a single tax organization.⁸² While this lack of institutional support

was certainly discouraging, it was not debilitating to the Colony effort. Fairhope succeeded in securing assistance from many single tax club members without first gaining the endorsement of the institution.⁸³

In ten years Fairhope made great strides toward gaining acceptance within the single tax movement. The Colony weathered some difficult early years when it appeared that any success would be achieved without assistance from established quarters of the movement. Within this ten year period, though, Fairhope would earn the support of numerous nationally prominent single taxers: Joseph Fels, Bolton Hall, Louis F. Post, M. H. Ramage, and John S. Crosby to name but a few. During its initial decade the Colony was persistent and increasingly assertive in its policy of putting itself in front of single taxers across the United States. Fairhope's patience eventually paid off as the Colony developed a loyal following, largely through the continued extension of the Courier's circulation.

*Post never behind
in the colony
idea*