

make it much easier for us to decide the proper course to take with regard to patents or any other social problem; including copyrights and the questions arising out of the organization and perpetuation of corporations.

Very many hardworking men—men whose activities are in every way highly useful to all of us—are in one way or another interested in patents and believe in them. Many of these men can readily be brought to see the iniquity of railroad and other franchise monopolies and the extreme unwisdom of taxing industry and consumption while letting monopolies including valuable unimproved land go untaxed.

Before we repel such men, as we inevitably will repel them, by attacking patents, we had better first be sure patents are wrong and second that if wrong they are vital or important and must needs be cleared away before we can reach the goal toward which all Single Taxers are striving. I very much doubt that patents can be shown to be wrong, and I feel certain that even if wrong they are relatively unimportant and had best be let alone, while we concentrate our efforts upon the thing which we are all agreed is wrong and *must* be righted.

In commerce, in politics, in industries, in science and every other form of human activity those who succeed, those who bring things to pass, are those who concentrate upon one thing and until that thing is accomplished regard it as the all important thing. We are agreed upon just one thing, i. e., the equal right of every human being to the use of the earth. In proportion as we concentrate upon that one thing we shall succeed, in proportion as we diffuse our energies and devote them to other things, not vital to our main object and regarding which we shall arouse needless opposition and prejudice, we shall fail or postpone final success.

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THE FAIRHOPE CONTROVERSY.

Communication from N. O. NELSON.

Editor Single Tax Review:

Responding to your request for some comments on the Fairhope situation, let me say first that it is difficult if not impossible for an outsider to fairly estimate a situation made up of local conditions and problems which he does not understand. I am neither able nor willing to make any criticisms on the details of Fairhope management. It is only upon the principles involved that I feel justified in commenting and advising.

The experience I have had in the making of Leclaire, not as a Single Tax colony, but as a settlement of people, has taught me some things that are applicable to all such special communities. I have been open minded to learn by experience, and experience is necessary in the application and development of any theory. While operating under the handicap of a possible autocratic power, I have so entirely obliterated all exercise of that power, that Leclaire is free from any sense of it and is as completely free and independent as any farming

NOTE.—N. O. Nelson, the millionaire proprietor of Leclaire, Ill., a co-operative town started in 1890, is a well-known Single Taxer, though Mr. Nelson describes himself as an "immediate opportunist." The profit sharing which Mr. Nelson began with his employes in 1886 has proven successful beyond all expectation. Mr. Nelson's practical business experience, his cautious judgment, united with his faith in democracy, give to his communication on Fairhope a peculiar value.—THE EDITOR.

community. Never once has any authority been exercised over private property or persons, nor has any question ever arisen to require it or to need adjustment. In our local public matters, I as a leader and active resident, have carried out what was wanted and as wanted, discontinuing anything that was apparently not wanted.

It is this question of authority that I consider the issue at Fairhope, and the erroneous application of it the cause of its troubles. Fairhope should be democratically managed. This I think is feasible, and unless it is Fairhope is not worth while. It would be too much like Pullman and too nearly allied to other centralized governments. The control of the taxing power and public service by the stock holders of a close corporation is the farthest possible remove from democracy. This corporation may and does admit or exclude members at its pleasure. Nominally, a belief in the Single Tax is a test of eligibility. In the very nature of things, this test is both arbitrary and indefinite. Anyone may claim to be a Single Taxer without being so. Anyone may be excluded because he does not hold the right kind of Single Tax theory, or he may be excluded on other grounds. The members of this corporation may be non-residents, quite a portion of them are. What number constitutes the corporation, what proportion of them reside in Fairhope, what proportion these bear to the non-members and disfranchised residents, has not, I believe, been stated. My understanding is that they are a minority of the residents. This corporation, assessing and collecting and disposing of the taxes, involves, very practically and completely, the old question of taxation without representation. The power to tax has always been regarded, and is the power to rule. In this case, it is a hereditary power, for the associates and successors are selected by those in power. A bare majority of these minority residents and non-residents hold the entire power. There is more harm in the sense of disfranchisement and helplessness on the part of the tenant residents than there is in the rate of rent, or in the spending of the money. Even if the disposition of the present members of the corporation be to admit all or nearly all of the residents, the fact that it requires a hundred dollars to get in would exclude most of the people that would ordinarily come to the colony. It amounts to an unheard of price to qualify for voting. A nation or a municipality cannot, in the long run, get better government than it will make for itself by majority rule. When we see how majorities govern, we are momentarily disheartened. Some men decide that rule by selection of the best is better, but most of us, practically most of mankind, now hold to the idea of democratic rule and let the people take the consequences. Whether all of the residents of Fairhope would manage its affairs as well as those who have paid one hundred dollars and become members of the corporation, whether they live in Fairhope, or Philadelphia, or New York, it seems to me fundamental that they must govern themselves. Any other plan is unsafe, and is sure to and ought to breed dissension and revolt. Certain reasonable limitations are everywhere put upon franchise, such as an age limit and a residence limit. It would be in harmony with the best democratic usage if the franchise in Fairhope were limited to those who had in their own name acquired a bona fide home in the colony and had been bona fide residents for one or two or three years.

Bona fide residence is one of the simplest common sense elements of good citizenship. No non-resident should have any vote. Henry George said, "I am for men." Men, and not money must, after all, be the power in a free community. If Fairhope cannot earn the money to pay its own way and buy additional land, then let its friends on the outside lend it money with or without interest, or give it money. Surely no good man would contribute the price of membership for the sole purpose of control. Any such would not be desirable controlling spirits. When the people of Fairhope should be thrown upon their

own resources, vote their own assessments, vote a disposal of the revenue, I think the majority would vote wisely. If, for one year or two, they should vote too low an assessment and have too little money to spend, they would certainly be turned out the next year. Those on the margin and occupying comparatively cheap land would, I should think, always be at least a large minority. Add to these those who have public spirit, who want the public utilities liberally and well administered, the Single Taxers who want the full rental value assessed, and the Single Tax idea and self government would certainly be safe in Fairhope. It is useless and wrong to force people into virtuous ways, even if it be to make the Single Tax theory effective in practice. If the operation of the Single Tax does not bring over to it a majority of those who live under it and have its benefits, then it will not survive and ought not to. In Leclair, which I have built up in the last fifteen years, I have instinctively followed the plan of leaving all individual matters to the residents. The public utilities are carried on by the business corporation, of which the main portion of the residents are a part, but all the residents have a full voice in what shall be done and what shall not be done in a public way. In no manner whatever has the power or the influence of a boss been exercised or felt. The public utilities, in all their ramifications, have been submitted to a referendum of all the residents by carrying out those that were suggested and by discontinuing those that were apparently not wanted. I refer to this, not as paralleling a Single Tax colony or as a duplicate of Fairhope, but as throwing light on the attitude that should exist between those who have the power, in whatever way it may be held, and the body of the people. The important thing is to carry out the will of the people, to recognize the expressed or clearly indicated wishes of the people. Whatever this leads to, be it better or worse, the people are entitled to have. Complete democracy may be carried out under any legal system. Single Tax stands first and foremost for Democracy, including equal, practical opportunities for every one.

I do not take kindly to the personal criticisms that have been made by some of the critics. That is too easy and common a practice. No one who does anything of consequence is proof against it. Washington, Lincoln, Wesley, and all great men have had a liberal share of it. It is the plan of conducting Fairhope, and only that, that Single Taxers are entitled to consider and criticise.

N. O. NELSON.



FROM EDWARD QUINCY NORTON.

Editor Single Tax Review:

Misunderstandings are ever one of the most fruitful causes of dissensions and disagreements. One of the most common mistakes made by correspondents who write me in regard to Fairhope and my position in reference to its claims is exemplified by that of a comparatively new worker in the Single Tax cause, who writes that he "is at a loss to understand the reason for my opposition to Fairhope, which seems to have taken shape the last few months, while the colony has been going on for years." I therefore deem it best to state the facts in regard to my attitude towards Fairhope and the Fairhope plan, for with me the two have always been kept separate, as the following scrap of history will show:

When the founder and former Secretary of Fairhope colony wrote me his first letter from Des Moines, asking my opinion as to the advantages Baldwin