

ly, and does not look his 70-odd years.

"Except," Mr. Gaston told me, "for the assistance of Mr. Joseph Fels some years after the colony got under way, Fairhope has been essentially a poor man's effort. The few pioneers possessed most meagre resources. Looking back, I am impressed with the idea that our common level of financial weakness was a favoring factor. It gave us a common viewpoint on practical questions arising, which we could not have obtained had there been inequality of individual resources.

"It fostered an atmosphere in which questions were threshed out on their merits, and leadership became a matter of sense and service, free from tendency to bias because of personal favor which might be given or withheld. It helped always to create and maintain a spirit of equality and democracy which I believe has been, and trust ever will be, one of the chief charms of Fairhope; often felt and appreciated by those even who are unable to analyze it."

THE history of Fairhope began a couple of years before the Mobile Bay settlement. A few friends of common convictions at Des Moines, Iowa, planned a practical test of Henry George's ideas in a single tax colony or enclave.

One of their number who traveled brought back a favorable report of the Fairhope site. On November 15, 1894, a group of pilgrims from Iowa, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Missouri, Minnesota, and the Pacific Coast landed on the eastern shore of Mobile Bay, to found the model colony. They called it by the optimistic name of Fairhope, "an effort to apply correct principles of human association now for the benefit of its people and an example to all others."

None of their neighbors in Alabama thought the pilgrims could make a go of it. The site was the wildest spot on the shore. The first block of 135 acres at \$6 an acre—later added to—was purchased January 5, 1895. It had to be cleared of pine and stumps. A town well was put down, a small school started. Active desire on the part of some to destroy the colony made it necessary to run the gantlet of the courts, with ultimate success. The mail boat snooted Fairhope, refused to leave mail, until ordered to do so by Washington. The colony established boat service to Mobile. A railroad was built, but later abandoned. A post office was erected with Mr. Gaston as first postmaster. The *Courier*, begun in Des Moines as an organ of the original group, was moved to Fairhope. Mr. Gaston purchased the paper, has edited it ever since. The town was incorporated. Mr. Gaston has served as secretary of the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation for all its 40 years with the exception of two terms.

To understand how the colony works, consider it as a private, cooperative corporation. The town of Fairhope proper is not a single tax corporation, but it is no misnomer to refer to the Single Tax Colony of Fairhope. The

former is contained in the latter.

Fairhope is governed by the laws of Alabama, but imposes no license or occupation taxes, particularly objectionable to single taxers, and is the only town in the state which does not impose these taxes.

THE Single Tax Corporation holds its land under deeds, but individuals hold from it under 99 year leases. Rentals collected by the colony corporation are used to pay municipal, county, and state taxes. The lease provides that "no part of rentals collected shall be appropriated as dividends for its members, or any other person, but that all shall be administered as a trust fund for the equal benefit of those leasing its lands."

The Single Tax Corporation reserves a legal right to sell its land but has

"NO HONEST EFFORT IS EVER WASTED"

By H. J. Barrett

IT WAS Chief Justice Holmes who said: "No honest effort is ever wasted."

What do you suppose he meant? If you spend years of effort building a business and the Depression wrecks it, the effort was wasted, was it not? If by hard and faithful service you worked your way up to a good job and, through no fault of your own, you lost it, the effort was wasted, was it not?

No, it was not. Judge Holmes saw clearly that the discipline involved in each instance toughened your fiber, made you mentally and morally athletic, gave you more stamina, made you more of a man or woman.

Struggle is the law of life, and a very good law it is. Hard hammering makes firm metal. Life's hammering makes firm-fibered men and women. That was the thought behind Robert Louis Stevenson's assertion: "We are not here to succeed but to keep on failing cheerfully."

Do you recall the man who prayed "not for an easy life but for strength to bear a hard one"?

Under any political or economic system there will always be struggle—struggle for fame, for more responsible jobs, for a chance to wield more power and influence. Without struggle we would become soft, inert, effete.

You may build a business, and the business may be swept away, but the qualities you built into your personality in building the business are built into your personality for all time.

When hard luck hits, you accept it as a challenge, not a misfortune. Keep on keeping on, knowing that Judge Holmes was everlastingly right. Life is a gymnasium, not a gambling house. A wise man measures your success not by what you achieve in the realm of dollars. He judges you by what you've built in the way of character, of force, of a disciplined, well-organized personality.

No man was ever a failure until he considered himself one.

never in the 40 years of its existence held it to be "expedient" to sell a foot. It has freely given land for schools, parks, streets, waterworks, and an electric plant. Ground rent is arrived at by public valuation. Lease holders may transfer leases with the consent of the corporation, adding thereto the cost of improvements, but they cannot add one cent to the land value. Several such speculative attempts have been nipped in the bud.

Fairhope seems to thrive and flourish under single tax. The average lease holder pays much less single tax than he would under the old tax system. A leasehold that costs about \$30 a year would easily cost \$100 in taxes to city, state, and county.

Some of the most desirable things about Fairhope might be called by-products. The community enjoys a freedom of thought and action which is responsible for several unusual projects. The Fairhope Organic School, founded and still conducted by Marietta Johnson, noted educator, is 29 years old, one of the oldest progressive schools in this country.

The Fairhope library is said to be the best small town library in the South. A unique institution is the Sunday Afternoon Forum, conducted in town-hall style, which attracts people from far and near. Fairhope's utilities are municipally owned and operated.

On the whole, the single tax can be called a real success in Fairhope.

SINGLE TAX BILL

(Continued from page 36)

graduated principle to the United States as a whole. There is nothing drastic or startling about the bill. It proposes the imposition of an annual excise charge of 1 percent of the value of all land holdings in excess of \$3,000 per individual owner. The value of the land, of course, consists of what remains after exemption of all man-made improvements. The same excise charge is imposed on all natural resources—oil and mineral deposits, water power (with the exemption of the structures necessary to use)—as well as on the franchises of all types of public utilities.

It has been estimated that the total untaxed land value in the United States approximates \$160,000,000,000. If only half of this amount were found to exist in tracts of \$3,000 and over, the 1 percent excise charge would reach the very substantial sum of \$800,000,000 annually.

The imposition of this excise charge would take away the need of continuing certain taxes now levied, like those on gasoline, oils, furs, matches, and the like.

Above all, the proposal is sound economically, because it would take for community purposes those values which the community creates by its very existence; and to the extent to which it is applied it will translate from theory into fact the whole meaning of our splendid heritage—the right of every American citizen to live.

Tax

HOW THE SINGLE TAX WORKS IN FAIRHOPE

By Hart Gilrand

“WE’VE JUST begun to pay taxes in this country—the next thing will be a capital tax—”

“This government will hold together as long as people pay taxes—when they can’t or won’t—”

These statements are off the record. One was made by a widely known editor, the other by a thoughtful club woman. Set those two statements up against each other and what do you get? You get a certain uneasiness akin to that felt by Mr. Francis Scott Key on a Maryland morning, of September, 1814, when he inquired in poetical language if the flag was still there.

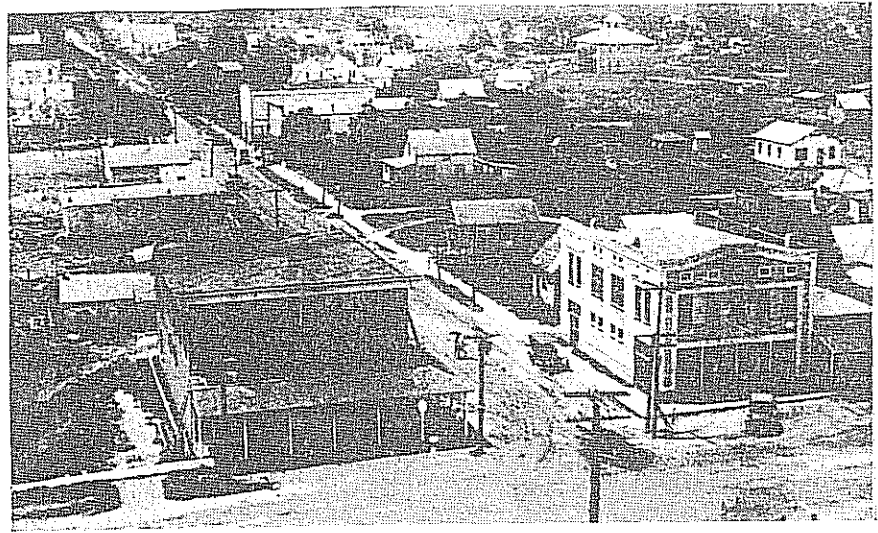
Today the paradox of idle acres and homeless citizens rises to mock the poet’s land of the free and home of the brave. Farmers’ revolts, putting off sheriffs’ sales with shotgun, strikes, have actually taken place under the Stars and Stripes.

Casting about for a new technique, a new angle of approach to the tax problem, communities have begun to consider single tax. As this idea assumed significance Edwin Baird commissioned the writer to visit the oldest single tax colony in the world, Fairhope, Alabama, and bring back some first-hand facts on its operation for readers of REAL AMERICA.

SINGLE TAXERS derive their economic philosophy from Henry George. Years ago, this man, asking himself the question: Why, with food and abundance in this rich country, are many of the people not getting all they need?—was so stimulated by the thought that he could not rest until he had written his great book, “Progress and Poverty,” in which many think he found the answer.

Single tax is not simple tax. To understand it one must give it careful study. It is an economic theory with many implications subversive of the present order.

In a generic sense single tax means just that. It is an effort to get away from the land gamble by levying on the citizen one tax for his land, called ground rent. He is not taxed for the improvements in the way of house, barn, or crops. His industry and initiative are not penalized as they are under other tax systems. He is not taxed for blue sky value. Booms and



Fairhope, Alabama

... the largest single tax colony in America.

speculative inflation, which single taxers conceive to be the basic evil underlying the present economic debacle, cannot happen to his land.

The land is looked upon by single taxers as a common heritage not to be monopolized, or kept for generations idle, or held for speculation, but to be put to legitimate use.

This article is no ballyhoo for Fairhope. The idea would not appeal to some people. On the other hand, Fairhope itself prefers citizens who are sympathetic to its principles. People are often attracted by the financial advantages of Fairhope without understanding what it is all about.

Fairhope, with a population of 1800, lies between Mobile and Pensacola, two Gulf Coast cities of the *Ancien Regime*.

MY excursion into Baldwin County, Alabama, brought me first to Montrose, neighbor town to Fairhope. Prescott A. Parker, president of the Civic Association of Montrose, lives here. I had been told he knew Henry George. Mr. Parker described himself as “a sort of self-appointed distributor of general information to those who seem to me worth while.” Parker is a New Englander by birth. He has written a number of articles and for some time edited a periodical, “Keep Close to the Ground.”

I asked him about single tax, if I could make a convincing argument for it for readers of REAL AMERICA.

“Perhaps,” he replied, “I can help you concerning single tax.

“To understand a book or a system of philosophy we must understand the writer’s viewpoint and the times in which he lived.

“At the time ‘Progress and Poverty’ was written, more than half the people lived upon farms and were ‘subsistence farmers.’ Until very recently I never heard the word ‘subsistence’ used in this sense.

“The organizations that were first formed to propagate Mr. George’s ideas were called ‘Land and Labor’ clubs, and we said that if a man could

get land, he could get a living. In those days this statement was a self-evident fact. It was indisputable. But today the farmer is only a food gambler and can live only by government coddling.

“EVEN today it is not disputed by economists that all wealth is the product of labor applied to land, and capital is that part of wealth that is used to assist the other two factors in the production of more wealth.

“Mr. George advocated placing all taxation upon land—it all comes to that anyway—according to its value, location, utility, mineral deposits, etc. This would greatly simplify government and make agricultural land more accessible, practically free.

“In Mr. George’s time nobody dreamed that what we now call ‘subsistence’ farming would go out of style.

“Without subsistence farming, the single tax is merely a simple, inexpensive, natural method of raising taxes. Human welfare will always depend upon human intelligence and the practices of the people.

“If improved social conditions were to follow the adoption of the single tax, it would have to be tied up with a more general adoption of subsistence farming. This means a change in the thought of the people and is not necessarily a result of change in taxation. Therefore, I do not think you can make out a convincing argument for single tax alone. It will have to be coupled with intelligence and sincerity of purpose.”

FAIRHOPE appears as a picturesque little town built on high red cliffs. It faces the bright expanse of Mobile Bay.

In the office of the Fairhope *Courier* I found its editor, Ernest B. Gaston. He bears the distinction of being the only survivor of the original group of pioneers who founded Fairhope. Like many actors in history, Mr. Gaston is too near his subject to realize his achievement. He is tall, spare, kind-