

Bob:

Thought this might interest
you.

Bonny and I look forward
to seeing you in San Francisco.

534 Cary Drive
Auburn, Alabama 36830
July 6, 1979

Bob

Governor Fob James
The Capitol Building
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

Dear Governor James:

I was appalled to learn recently that the State Senate has passed a bill revoking the charter of the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation, and that a similar bill (HB 302) is presently being considered in the House Judiciary Committee.

Senator Ted Little tells me that the measure which passed the Senate was regarded as a bill of local application, and that most members refrained, out of courtesy to the senator from Baldwin County, from opposing it. However, even though the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation does happen to be located in Baldwin County, it has sympathizers throughout the nation, and, indeed, throughout the world. Moreover, persons of good will do whatever they can to oppose injustice even when it does not affect their own communities, and it would be difficult to exaggerate the injustice of the action contemplated by the bills. This is one reason why I have taken the trouble to write this letter. Another reason is that, as a professor of philosophy specializing in social and political theory, I consider the Fairhope Single Tax Colony (of which the Corporation is the legal embodiment) to be a valuable and successful social experiment of long standing, which ought to be encouraged rather than abolished -- and which, in fact, could serve in many ways as a model to the state.

The Colony was founded in 1894 to demonstrate (within the constraints imposed by existing laws and the limited financial resources of its organizers) the efficacy of the theory of Henry George, the famous American economist and social philosopher whose greatest book, Progress and Poverty, was first published exactly a century ago. Someday, if you ever have the time, I should consider it a privilege to discuss this theory with you. I have just finished editing a volume which analyzes the arguments of all its major critics. The research which I did in connection with this task has convinced me that the theory is not only sound in its essentials but even more relevant today in most respects than it was when George propounded it.

The Colony provides an admirable illustration of how public revenue needs can be satisfied through the appropriation of community-created site-values, leaving the rewards of private effort and initiative to their producers or the designees thereof. It operates through a system of leaseholds. The leaseholder pays something approaching the annual rental value of his site to the

Fairhope Single Tax Corporation; state and local property taxes are defrayed out of this sum; and the surplus, if any, is used for such public purposes as paving, drainage, and park and cemetery maintenance. The improvements on a leased site belong to the leaseholder, and no charge is levied on them by the Corporation except in cases where they are financed by it. The Colony antedates the town of Fairhope by fourteen years, and was established on a site inferior to those of such existing settlements as Daphne, Montrose, and Battle's Wharf. Yet Fairhope has far outstripped these neighboring locations, and, in fact, is listed in the book, Safe Places, as one of the hundred most desirable communities in the nation in which to live. Colony land comprises only about 15% of the area of Fairhope, but accounts -- according to the latest figures I have seen-- for over 60% of the assessed valuation (including improvements). The definitive if slightly dated study by Paul and Blanche Alyea, Fairhope, 1894-1954 (University of Alabama Press, 1956), states: "A principal reason for both the relatively greater material progress of Fairhope over its older and somewhat better endowed neighboring communities, and the more intensive and better balanced development of Corporation land in comparison with other land within the municipality of Fairhope, is the system of land tenure introduced by the original colonists."

Previous attempts to revoke the Corporation's charter were characterized by a disposition to slander it as being "communistic." This is, of course, absurd, as a perusal of the enclosed brochure should make apparent. In his book on Henry George, the well-known libertarian essayist, Albert Jay Nock, called him "the philosopher of freedom," "the exponent of individualism as against statism," and "the very best friend the capitalist ever had." I myself voted for Barry Goldwater, and would do so again were the opportunity to present itself. Even if the accusation were true, however, this would be no reason to revoke the charter. For communism, whatever its practical defects, is morally offensive only when compulsory. If the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation, a strictly voluntary organization, were to be dissolved by the Legislature because of its alleged "communism," then the Benedictine Abbey at Cullman should be dissolved too, for the Rule of St. Benedict enjoins voluntary community of goods.

I do not know whether the accusation of communism is among the arguments advanced in support of the bills currently in question, but in view of the high demand for Colony land, it is evident that some leaseholders would like to be able to make a speculative killing by the transformation of their leaseholds into freeholds. This, I have no doubt, is the real motive behind the move to revoke the charter and dissolve the Corporation.

The Fairhope Single Tax Corporation is a voluntary, non-profit organization. No one is obliged to belong to it or to lease

Corporation land who is not in sympathy with its principles or with the conditions of the lease agreement. It has a long and honorable history, and provides a proven alternative to the prevailing practice of rewarding speculation and penalizing improvement. I hope that you will use every means at your disposal (including, if necessary, the veto) to defend it in the face of the unconscionable threat to which it is now subject.

Kindly remember me to Mrs. James.

Yours faithfully,

Robert V. Andelson

Robert V. Andelson

Copies to:

Rep. Rick Manley
Rep. Pete Turnham

Enclosure