

eve of a new and more equitable era in agriculture, but having done a little, and with such a great deal yet to do, it makes me blush to hear that some Liberals are urging their leaders to

“Halt with the end half won  
For an instant dole of praise.”

In this matter disaster lies in hesitation. Liberals must not forget that what the Tories will not give in policy they will cheerfully give in charity, and many of our rural divisions suffer by a system of generous Tory gifts. The overcrowded industrial centres of the North, teeming with hard headed and shrewd artisans, will not brook hesitation, and will not tolerate Toryism. They will accept the militant policy of the Labor party. The destiny of Liberalism rests not upon palliatives like pensions, or even national insurance. It rests upon a reform that will remedy the evils of rural life, and re-act beneficially on industrial life. The policy of the taxation of land values will open the eyes of the dwellers in the country to the fact that the earth is beautiful, that the wind on the heath is bracing, that there are sun, moon and stars above, and that the poverty of past centuries was not the just reward of the toiler.

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## FAIRHOPE, ITS PROBLEMS AND ITS FUTURE.

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(*For the Review.*)

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By J. BELLANGEE.

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NOTE.—This article is printed without editorial comment, and without obtruding our own views of Fairhope and Single Tax colonies generally. Mr. Bellangee is a friend of Fairhope—the famous Single Tax colony on the shores of Mobile Bay. He is at the same time one of the gentlest critics of the Fairhope Corporation which administers the affairs of that colony.—EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW.

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It has been about a score of years since the enterprise of Fairhope was first projected. Up to that time the theory of Progress and Poverty had not been established in any human institution. The irresistible charm of Mr. George's style appealed to literary critics, the irrefutable force of his logic convinced the mind of thinkers, and the catholicity of his spirit, the purity of his purposes, and his devotion to justice, aroused the interest and sympathy of reformers. But the great body of those who control the forces of civilization in business and politics were heartlessly indifferent; it had made but a slight impression on men and affairs. Such men are usually imitators rather than projectors; they are willing to back up experiments that have proven successful, but as a rule they risk but little on untried innovations.

Yet George's philosophy had made a profound impression upon the



thoughtful dreamers, the idealists with altruistic bias, and hope was kindled anew in the breasts of many who saw the star that he had pointed out. It was evident that the cross of a new crusade had been lifted up, but to what conquests it would lead and upon what battlefields it would win its victories, who could tell? Today the world recognizes the idea as a growing force, making irresistible progress along a wide extended skirmish line.

May we not at Fairhope claim the credit of successful achievement as Pioneers; really the first to raise a standard that has never been lowered?

At the time to which I refer the Hyattsville experiment had been tried and declared unconstitutional by the courts. The campaign in Delaware had been fought with but meagre results, scarcely more than to demonstrate the spirit of sacrifice that the Single Tax would call forth. Some attempts at political action had demonstrated the inertia of political forces when called to advance along moral lines. Repeated efforts to secure legislative sanction for local option in taxation had everywhere failed.

The writer well remembers going with Louis F. Post to plead for the recognition of our ideas before a special committee to whom the Iowa Legislature had assigned the task of suggesting reforms in the tax laws of the State; they accorded us a respectful hearing, but utterly ignored our suggestions. In New York, Ohio and other States similar efforts had met with the same indifference.

But the more repeated the rebuffs that were met by Single Taxers in their efforts along that line, the more imperative it seemed to the writer that in some way the plan should be localized in an experiment at least.

There are so many, even among high minded and thinking men, who cannot give their active support to a proposition, however just, that has not in some way been proven to be likewise expedient, that it seemed to the writer one thing of all most needed to start the ball a-rolling, was at the very least, a working model; even though crude and hand-made, so to speak, something must be furnished to show that the machinery of the Single Tax would work with the precision and certainty claimed for it.

Thinking of the matter in that connection it occurred to him that a body of land might be somewhere secured, to be administered by a holding company which by some method incorporated in its charter could transmute its rental values, annually collected, into public services through the payment of all the public taxes of its renters, and promote such public services from any surplus that after such payment might remain.

Accordingly, when Mr. E. B. Gaston, of Des Moines, Iowa, asked his co-operation in promoting a Socialist Colony, which he was planning, the writer suggested the above idea as a preferred substitute; subsequently we joined with others in elaborating the plan of Fairhope, and getting it before the public. The connection of the writer with the enterprise in its earlier stages was merely that of a member in the corporation that was formed, assisting by advice and his membership fee in getting it under way. The Colony of Single Taxers was located and in operation several years before he joined them in person.



Upon Mr. Gaston devolved the labor and sacrifice of the preliminary promotion of the enterprise, and to him belongs the credit of surmounting the manifold difficulties that were encountered in its early history. They would have discouraged one of less persistence and optimism; it is indeed a difficult task to awaken dreamers, (not from their dreams) but to the wakeful determination to make their dreams come true.

Not the least discouraging condition with which he had to contend was the apathy and in some cases the opposition of leading Single Taxers to whom he appealed for aid, and among the earlier of those who gave him their assistance there were, I believe none who ranked as leaders in the cause. We were therefore compelled to bear the usual hardships of the Pioneer in a strange land. It was a small band of enthusiasts, devoid of prestige or wealth, who took upon themselves the great responsibility of upholding in practice, as well as in theory, the principles of a new philosophy that it was hoped would revolutionize the civilization of the world.

Our effort, though small and feeble, drew to us attention and assistance. Contributions of land and money enabled us to secure a body of land on the eastern shore of Mobile Bay; small at first but which now embraces nearly four thousand acres. Concerning our material advancement, which has been considerable and satisfactory, much has from time to time found its way into the public prints of the country. The writer expects to devote this article to some phases of interest in connection with the enterprise that have not usually received treatment in published accounts. Eighteen years of successful existence ought to furnish some lessons of experience that will be valuable for encouragement, and suggestive as warning for the future.

Let me say at the outset, that while the details of administration have not at all times been such as to me seemed best, yet in the final outcome the readjustments have brought results that have been satisfactory to a remarkable degree; especially has our experience demonstrated that nothing can be alleged that tends to discredit the claims that Single Taxers make as to the results of the application of George's theory. Such inconveniences as have come to us have all been clearly tracable to the natural handicaps of location, or to unfortunate policies of administration, not essential parts of Single Tax philosophy.

The necessity of having our land held in the name and under the administration of a holding corporation, naturally gave to the company something of a paternalistic or socialistic character. Our internal troubles have all been of a personal origin and resulted from disagreements over details of administration, rather than economic principles, and should be considered as a characteristic of human frailty rather than as reacting even remotely upon the Single Tax.

As I understand it, the Single Tax is a system of revenue, and not of administration; to secure the best possible application, its administration should be as impersonal as possible. But in our case the personel of the holding company could not be overlooked. By our claims, as promoters of a more



just system of public administration, we naturally invited the public judgment as to our consistency, and while we felt sure that we were making for a perfect ideal, we were not justified in assuming that in all things we were above the ordinary mistakes of human frailty.

There was no lack in the enthusiasm with which we prosecuted our task, but while lacking in experience we also, no doubt, lacked in the tact so necessary on the part of those who direct others who do not regard their interests from the same point of view; we knew our way, for we were following a trail that our leader had blazed; they were looking for a highway along which there should be no stumbling.

Soon after the founding of Fairhope, one of the most conspicuous of efforts at colonization in the interests of Socialism collapsed, and quite a number of Ruskinites found their way to Fairhope, and all through our later history we have had with us probably a majority who strongly espoused the Socialistic faith. Of course, they all theoretically at least, believe in the socialization of the land, and they have without exception, I think, made good citizens. They are all men of ideas and sincere purposes.

Some of our most helpful members and citizens were formerly, and still are socialists, but today they are not clamoring for the extension of the functions of our corporation into new fields of socialistic effort. They realize that the more they are thus extended the higher the rents must be fixed to cover the added expense.

In fact, the greatest internal dissension that we have so far encountered arose over the institution of a local telephone system and the attendant increase of rents. I doubt if that would have been serious, if personal likes and dislikes could have been ignored, and all renters had been frankly admitted to a choice of alternatives, of having the service with increased rents or going along without either.

The friction was aroused rather by the necessarily arbitrary method of promoting the service, and its limited and exceptional use, rather than because of any seriously burdensome increase of rents; of course, the possibilities of still further indefinite and arbitrary increase, worked upon the imagination of the distrustful and promoted discontent. Like a new shoe, the Single Tax had not received the adjustment to its required service of which it was easily capable. This incident, however, with others of a similar nature, has had a tendency to show the necessity of a greater democracy in public administration, and a wider extension of responsibility.

With a just system of revenue we can see what else we need and can properly have. However necessary it may be to retain absolutely in the hands of the faithful the title to the land; and to guarantee absolutely that all values created by the public be reserved to the public, I am thoroughly convinced by our experiences, that beyond thus safe-guarding our experiment, the Fairhope public, without distinction of economic beliefs or relation to the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation, should be permitted in the most democratic manner possible to decide absolutely for what purposes those values should



be devoted; and that no service should be undertaken or promoted by the arbitrary authority of the Executive Council until it had been authorized by the public, in some unmistakable manner.

Such a considerate deference to the public will would not only be the most potent means of cultivating a proper spirit, but would promote a sense of responsibility and wisdom of public opinion that would become one of the most valuable assets of the corporation, and one of its greatest sources of value to the lands. A town in which every one had an active interest and influence would be ahead of all others as a desirable place of residence; this would be infusing into our public administration the principles of Organic development, so successfully employed in the Fairhope School of Organic Education. Nor would such an end require for its consummation any change in our Constitution. There is nothing in that charter forbidding, in any degree, such a deference to public opinion, and there is no insurmountable obstacle in the way of securing such a co-operation on the part of the public.

All that would be needed is the establishing of a custom of frankly appealing to the public for an expression of opinion and a faithful obedience on the part of the corporation authorities to its will. The only real obstacle to such a programme is the lack of sympathy and tactful consideration for the rights of others, which becomes the besetting weakness of those who possess, in even a small degree, the exercise of arbitrary power. As unearned wealth is a curse in the hands of its possessor, so is undelegated and irresponsible power in the hands of a public servant. And as there is no wisdom so valuable as that derived from experience so the lessons that Fairhope's experience in this regard are teaching are quite as necessary to learn as are the fundamental principles of the Single Tax. Thus, by the same illustration of experience that we prove the truth of our main proposition, that the increment of land created by the public should be used by the public for public services; we demonstrate that its rightful administration must be with the public where it belongs.

And I feel justified in making the unqualified prediction that the future will see some method adopted whereby the public wealth created by the lessees of Fairhope's lands, which, of course, include the resident members of the Fairhope Corporation, will be administered, not only for the benefit of all the lessees, but in full conformity with their judgment and desires.

I know that there are many members who recognize the inconsistency of the public development depending entirely upon the judgment and official action of the few whose administration is legally beyond the control of the many, and that they will not rest until some effective method is found to make the public administration a reflex of public opinion. Personally, I prefer that this result shall be accomplished by common consent and mutual understanding, since the unwritten laws of any community are always more binding than its statutes; they are more binding because they result from co-operation and mutual appreciation and forbearance, rather than from contests of authority and power which always inspire antagonism.

The only justification for taking the ground rent from individuals for



the benefit of the public is because, having been created by the public, it belongs to the public. The only justification for spending it in particular services for the public is the fact that the public has particular need of such services. To assume that a few individuals know better what the public needs than the public itself, is discouraging to public spirit and correspondingly depressing to land values.

That is the underlying fallacy that has made all governments oppressive and the development of civilization one-sided; we have nowhere comprehended and applied full democracy. History shows how useless it is to expect that individual gatherers of unearned increment can be depended upon to administer their wealth as "stewards of the Lord," and the case of Trinity Church as a corporate administrator of landed estates is not an inspiring example to the good people who constitute the membership of the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation. The most pitiable example of human degradation (not depravity but degradation) that the writer ever witnessed he found in the region of the holdings of Trinity Church. The only aim of all governmental devices should be to secure to all equality of opportunity not only to earn a living, but to realize full self expression.

I have dwelt at length upon this phase of the subject because I consider it one of the most important, and because I think others will recognize that in this matter difficulty is more likely to arise than in any other; I am happy to say that we at Fairhope are alive to the subject and no doubt will devise some proper solution of the difficulty.

Fairhope is growing faster today than ever before; not so much by the coming of those who have mastered the Single Tax philosophy, but by the increase of the number of those who accept the proffered fair-dealing that it offers and who find it profitable to accept the pecuniary advantage that it affords in restoring to them their natural rights to a share in the land.

With the public, the disbelief in the promises and fairness of Fairhope professions has seemingly entirely vanished. Its eighteen years of continued prosperity have enabled it to outstrip in growth and wealth all other towns on the eastern shore of Mobile Bay whose existence began before the war, and it has built up a thriving village upon the abandoned site where capital failed to establish one in the ordinary way, viz., the projected "Alabama City."

One of the most obvious inducements that it affords to settlers is that a contemplated resident can enter into full and immediate possession, on a ninety-nine year lease, of a piece of land without buying it; he knows that he will never have to pay a purchase price for it and that even if he is required to pay a reasonable interest on the current value of the lot, that payment is offset by the assumption by the Corporation of all taxes assessed to him of whatever kind, except on moneys and credits; even his poll and road taxes are thus carried for him. These taxes are supposed to represent the claims which the public has upon its citizens, and the rent which he pays is supposed to equal the yearly value of the land which he uses, which value is dependent upon the presence of the public; therefore he returns to the public through



the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation what he receives from it and the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation pays the cost of the public services from which he benefits. If, after the public taxes were thus paid, all surplus rents were thrown into the Bay, that method would be preferable to having them retained as unearned increment in private pockets.

But our experiment requires that it be returned to the public in additional public services, and that end can be best served by arranging that it be spent under the conscious direction of the public itself; thereby stimulating public spirit and enterprise, and cultivating the public conscience in its appreciation of justice in public affairs.

In ordinary communities public functions are so managed as to be the means of exploiting the people while serving their interests. Here in Fairhope we have the machinery whereby the public interests may not only be served, but developed by the very device with which we equalize opportunities in the use of land; but we cannot allow a few of our people, less than 20 per cent. of the population, who by reason of their memberships have legal authority, to monopolize the direction of affairs of public interest without cultivating a class spirit that always comes to those who administer unearned wealth or undirected authority.

The resident members of the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation, being likewise lessees, would have all the influence in public affairs and administration that rightfully belongs to them, if a policy such as I have suggested should be followed, and since it is the logical solution, it will, I am sure, be ultimately worked out.

Some of the details of public administration are simplified and cheapened by our method of lease-holding; transfers are not attended by fees for abstracts or for official records; a change of possession is simply noted in the minutes and other corporation records.

This is obviously all that is needed, because the land in Fairhope is held only for use and occupancy, and the possession of its lands is not in the name of unknown residents; neither are its interests subordinated by titles in the name of non-residents whose primary interests are elsewhere. The usual transfer fees, though not large, become quite a considerable sum saved to Fairhope yearly, when the entire volume of transfers is considered.

The disputes over division lines are not the source of contention in Fairhope that they often are in communities where land has a speculative value. Here if the lot line, as platted by the corporation, is found inconvenient, the parties interested in the use of the lands determine where it would be most convenient for their mutual satisfaction, and the corporation collects from each the rent of the land thus limited; here again, use and occupancy, rather than speculative gains, determine the settlement.

The saving to the land user of the purchase price of the land he holds enables him to make a more profitable use of the money at his disposal, by increasing by that much his working capital; consequently, our people live in better houses, and have the use of better business facilities than they would in ordinary communities with the same investment of capital.



There is also a distinct advantage in this situation to one wishing to dispose of his holding; his property all represents live capital and hence is all marketable and requires less money from the purchaser. Buyers for inexpensive but paying properties are always more plentiful than for those that require a large outlay.

But the greatest benefit that this phase of the situation affords is the fact that those who seek for opportunity to invest in speculative ventures are not attracted to Fairhope. Fairhope's policy invites only working capital and the industry of willing labor. Even the tourists who find Fairhope a most agreeable place to winter, spend their money for the products and services of labor.

If a lessee finds that he has taken more land than he can profitably use, he can without loss transfer a part to another lessee, or surrender it back to the corporation; that is frequently done and probably Fairhope is the only place where it occurs. In such an event, the lessee surrenders nothing that is his or that abridges his sphere of usefulness; it is just naturally easy for him to be unselfish in such a case. All such conditions, so agreeable to the equities in the case, constitute a force for education in economic justice that does much to augment the moral equipoise of our people.

There is one condition, resulting from our plan, about which there is a difference of opinion. The occupant of corporation lands—not possessing his holding in fee simple—is not able to mortgage it to the capitalists. This is assumed by some to be a handicap; to the writer it seems to be a distinct advantage. He has saved the purchase price of his holding, and thereby increased his capital probably nearly as much as in other communities he could gain by giving a mortgage, but without the risk attending the latter plan. Besides, credit speculation is only a species of gambling, often against great odds, that has no basis in justice or sound business.

That Fairhope's policies do not invite to her borders those who would profit by the questionable methods which money loaning promotes, is one of the incidental advantages that its policies secure. Here we will not only learn to use labor to its greatest advantage, but to give to it the highest honor. What is true of an individual in respect of borrowing is also true of a community; communities as well as individuals are exploited by the money lender.

One of the wisest provisions of the charter of Fairhope is that forbidding it to contract any interest-bearing or mortgage indebtedness. While it may have, in some measure, held back development of some forms of public service, it has safe-guarded Fairhope against reckless promotions that would jeopardize the interests of all; had it not been for that provision in our constitution, the thousand of dollars contributed by Single Taxers to our land fund, would have been exposed to great danger of loss through the financial embarrassment of the corporation. My private opinion is that without this prohibition, Fairhope, ere this, would have been bankrupt and unable longer to pursue the experiment that has proved such a conspicuous success. This prohibition has been facetiously referred to as making the corporation fool-proof; but all



will admit that anything that diminishes chances of foolishness in public affairs makes land values greater and more secure. If Fairhope should furnish an asylum for all who are too foolish to safely borrow it would soon become the most populous city in America.

That land taxed to its full rental value would be used to its full income value, has been claimed by Single Taxers as the logical result of the tax; Fairhope shows unmistakeably in its development the truth of that claim. But it sometimes happens that a new comer with some wealth and a purse-proud disposition develops a lot to such an extent that his taxes exceed his rent; now to take advantage of such a situation under ordinary conditions, would, outside of Fairhope, be an evidence of business sagacity and shrewdness and would flatter the pride and increase the importance of the schemer; but here in Fairhope the effect is different. While it stimulates his neighbors to keep step with him, it teaches him the folly of his vanity and in the end he sells his holdings at a discount and transfers his wealth to outside property. We can well afford to pay the extra tax of a few such "horrible examples" for the sake of the riddance in general of such a class. But we have long since ceased to fear the impending contingency of the building in our midst of a "million dollar residence." Fairhope is happily in that condition, that she does not attract the man of wealth to exploit her for his own personal gain, and with the advantages that she affords, even her humblest citizens do not need charity.

Neither does Fairhope, as an organization, need donations of any form of wealth except that from which all other wealth is derived—the land. For the present, it has all that it needs of land to demonstrate in a small way the advantages of its basic principle; but an extension of its area would make its demonstration all the more prominent.

Some have feared that the taxes it has to pay on its lands not yet leased will become burdensome; but at present it derives quite an income from the sale of wood and timber, far in excess of the taxes on the unoccupied land; when that resource is gone the land as a public pasture will be worth its taxes.

It is often claimed that under the Single Tax, corporations could not be oppressive; it is too early yet to judge of that matter in connection with the Single Tax at Fairhope. Certain it is that here corporations for pecuniary profit have not flourished; either from mismanagement or because the atmosphere has not been congenial, all that have so far been projected have been short-lived. Individual efforts seem to have been so far more successful.

There are those who insist that the rents should annually take all of the unearned increment, which is theoretically correct; but who is wise enough to determine what that is; certainly it cannot be accomplished by the arbitrary edict of the few. Now nature always provides, if her plans are fully comprehended, some automatic supply for every want she creates, some feasible plan to execute her purposes. Suppose the people choose to pay rent sufficient to secure what public services they think they need, they are then



satisfied, which is the first and greatest public service that can be rendered. If they have wisely chosen, the benefits derived will increase land values and distribute them equally; if a surplus of rent remains unabsorbed, it is there for future needs, and this the people are sure to realize. But if they are arbitrarily forced to accept what their judgment does not approve, the discontent depresses land values and destroys the natural increase. A despotism can never become benevolent. Compliance can sometimes be enforced; co-operation never. Progress can never thrive where idealism does not vitalize effort; the strictly theoretical is, after all, the most strictly practical. "Where there is no vision the people perish."

It has been suggested that the members having paid their \$100 membership fees are entitled to a special consideration, as a sort of interest on their investment; I am glad to be able to state that the idea did not come from a member; I know of none who have become members or who have contributed to the land fund who have any such interest in the enterprise.

With equal justification, those who contribute to the building of a church or the maintenance of the preaching, might claim a fee of every sinner who was brought under conviction of sin.

The eighteen years of Fairhope's success have given it the right to claim the attention of all interested in economic progress. For Fairhope has been a success; it has outstripped all competitors on the eastern shore of the bay, as has been said, and of all the villages in a county as large as the State of Rhode Island, it ranks second only to Bay Minnette, a railroad junction, and the County seat.

As residents, it has not to any great extent attracted the richer class, but rather those who rank superior in intellect and culture. It has attracted to its borders the industrious in habit, the altruistic in temperament, and the sincere in purpose; the frivolous, the vain, the vicious and the greedy have not found the spirit of Fairhope congenial to their aspirations; they have not been attracted in any marked degree by its plan of operations and its social atmosphere.

Fairhope's weakness is found in the difficulty experienced in harmonizing its professed desire to promote individual rights, with the centralization of power permitted by its legal statutes. The machinery of the law permits the Executive Council of her Corporation which owns the land to be almost despotic in power, while her purposes are the promotion of the equal and highest individual rights and benefits.

To vitalize the democracy that would promote those rights and benefits, the writer believes the most feasible plan to be the informal referendum to the entire body of lease holders, including members, of all important matters of public policy, permitting also an initiative referendum when they so desire. But, whatever method of determining the public sentiment may be adopted, the Executive Council must keep with the public the most absolute good faith.

No method, however ingenious or however legalized in form, that in effect denies full and free expression of public sentiment will ever satisfy the people



of Fairhope; and no execution of the popular will that does not fully and completely keep faith in its professions will either answer the claims of justice or promote the public harmony.

We must provide the means of giving the people all they want and what they want, and are willing and able to pay for in ground rents, simply because it is their right. We need no change in the constitution to keep us up to our highest ideals in this matter if we live up to them voluntarily.

The Fairhope Single Tax Corporation must recognize fully the right of the people to rule, and the public must realize fully their responsibility in expressing their wishes. I believe that some such method of mutual confidence and of mutual sharing of responsibility and co-operation would make the administration of Fairhope's affairs almost ideal.

We may safely trust that the mental process of observing the effect of our fundamental provisions and realizing the certainty in their experience that its action will equalize the opportunities of all our people in the use of land, will give to them also a stronger grip on the spiritual truth, that justice is above expediency and is its highest form.

Then our Colony could give answer to the inquiry of the world; We are not our brother's keepers, We are his brothers.

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### ADDRESS OF CORNELIUS DONOVAN, PRESIDENT OF TENANTS' UNION, OF NEW YORK, AT DINNER OF TENANTS' UNION, MAY 3, 1913.

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With the tickets announcing this dinner you received a circular which briefly stated some of the objects and aims of our Union, and asserted that Tenants' Rights has been our platform from the beginning. What are tenants' rights? What do we want? In a word, the rights of life, liberty and personal dignity—the rights symbolized by this banner of freedom, for it is, historically at least, the flag of our Declaration of Independence more than it is that of the constitution, which sometimes halts behind it. In the very language of Jefferson, these fundamental rights are inalienable. We could not if we wanted to grant to our agents or representatives the right to sell them or give them away. If they have made statutes or enacted laws, which in effect give fundamental rights away, such laws are as unconstitutional as though all the courts had passed upon them and so decided. And they are unconstitutional regardless of the number or power of the courts that may have sustained statutes that seek to abrogate human rights.

Of course, the rights of which I speak are not exclusively tenants' rights, but they are our rights, and inalienable, and therefore the tribute that most of us pay to some of us is in our opinion unconstitutional. We demand of our own public servants the right to life, which means the access to the only