

Postoffice Telephone 296 Central  
Telegrams or Cables "Flakiness London"

9929

39 Wilson street

London EC

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15th August 1911

Mr A C Pleydell  
29 Broadway  
New York U.S.A.

Dear Mr Pleydell

Yours of the 4th inst, which purports to be an answer to mine of the 28th ultimo, has just been received.

You say you<sup>"</sup> have not asked me to come to your rescue. I never said you did; nor did I ever ask you or Mr Purdy to help me in my work or that which the Commission have in hand. I asked both of you to help in the single-tax movement, which I was doing all I could to forward. The single-tax movement is not my job, nor your job, nor Mr Purdy's, but that of all men who see the iniquity of the private ownership of land and special privilege.

You remind me of my saying that I declined to take responsibility for the acts of the Commission, but you omitted to mention why I made that assertion (mentioned in the very same sentence), viz:- that I do not run the Commission. The Commission runs itself and is responsible to itself and the public, whom it may, or may not, abuse. I am not seeking to avoid responsibility!

I simply place in the hands of the Commission certain sums of money which I have pledged myself to put up; and neither you nor anyone else can say that I have ever sought to influence that Commission. I may differ with this or that member of the Commission -- and I have good reason for differing with some members whose names are on the Commission's letter-head -- yet I should not object to having a row with any individual whose name appears on the letter-head, but would not kick up a row with the Commission, particularly when I see no special call for it.

Again, my dear Mr Pleydell, the situation cannot be strengthened by saying that, at the meeting called by the Fels Fund Commission in New York, I said I did not care whether other people liked what the Commission did, seeing that I (J.F.) was prepared to furnish them all the money required. That is a terminological inexactitude! though I claim no credit for coining the term. I have boldly stolen it from Winston Churchill. In plain English, the meaning of the term could be expressed in shorter words, but let it go at that!

" Thank you for giving me liberty (which you so clearly do) to turn over to a board of trustees as much money as I choose to spend in any lawful way I or they decide on. Have you any objection to my spending money in an unlawful way?

15 Aug '11

I have no recollection of the Commission ever having been advertised as a single-tax organization, but I have seen it advertised as an organization of single-tax men and women who want to get a measure of the single tax in operation in at least one State within five years; and I guess (I got this term in Maine!) they are going to do it!

Of course an organization of single tax people, when they get together, and talk the single tax, may label themselves -- and with truth -- a single-tax conference. I don't suppose, for a moment, that my picture on the cover of the announcement of that meeting in New York, had anything to do with the men coming under the definition of "single taxers". The notice of the meeting may, as you say, have been printed by the Fels Fund, and its contents may have been all for the purpose of shewing that the work of the Commission had the endorsement of single taxers; and yet it did not say all single taxers. If we had the endorsement of all men who profess to be followers of the economic philosophy of Henry George, we would indeed be respectable! It might have been good business, as an advertising dodge, to have gathered in the names of some of those I thought were single-tax men in the Eastern part of America: for instance, those of Allen Ripley Foote, A.C. Pleydell, &c, &c. This would have added strength to our elbows!

If the meeting of about 200 men in New York, to which you so sneeringly refer, was not a regularly called meeting of single taxers, what was it? Whether or not you believe that the Fels Fund Commission work is unrelated to the single tax, will not cause me any sleepless nights; nor am I particularly concerned with whether or not you intend to wage a defensive or any other kind of warfare against the Commission, or me, or anybody else.

My compliments to Mr E L Heydecker, who signs the P.S. of four lines to your letter, which letter he endorses; and, incidentally, he also endorses Foote, Purdy and Pleydell. I cannot but admire Heydecker's mixed judgment.

Yours very truly

*Joseph Fels*

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16th August 1911

Mr A C Pleydell  
29 Broadway  
New York U. S. A.

Dear Pleydell

The two letters that you wrote me and the two replies there-  
to that I sent you are rather worrying me; and I want to withdraw my two  
letters to you, and want you to forget that you wrote your two letters to  
me. The cause of human freedom is too great and pressing for men - real  
men - to be dropping their work and quarrelling about other men.

I feel that what you want is what I want, and that it matters but  
little what some fellows think about our cause.

It is of no special significance to Henry George whether Allen  
Ripley Foote is a saint or a sinner, but it matters a great deal whether  
you and I are using the time we have left to live Henry George.

I am heartily ashamed of having written you the two letters, and hope  
you are no less ashamed of the letters you have written me. I have no  
right to sit in judgment on you or on any other man; nor have you any more  
right.

Let us both freely acknowledge to each other that I, Kiefer, Heydecker  
Eggleston and you and everybody else mixed up in this row are asses.

Here is my hand!

Yours very truly

Joseph Fels