

Ølstykke, Denmark,

Decemb. 23. 1913.

Acknowledged: said Mr Fels
was in America & it would do
no good to forward this letter
to him, &c Dec 30 JG

Mr. Joseph Fels,
Philadelphia & London.

Dear Mr. Fels,

In writing the following to you about the troubles we Singletaxers here in Denmark have to go through on account of the personal disagreement among our leaders, I am perfectly aware that it is very difficult for any one, especially a foreigner, to fully understand the position of things here, and so it is very possible that I shall be misunderstood. - But there is no help for it. I feel it my duty to write to you just what I am now going to write. I beg you to read it, with patience and as benevolently as you can.

I am writing exclusively on my own account. Nobody knows that I write or what I write. I have spoken to no one about it, and no one has called on me to write anything to you at all.

I am no "leader" in our movement, and I have but very little ambition in that direction (perhaps it is so because I have not got the gift of an orator). But yet, I serve our cause to the best of my ability, usually sitting at my home (in the country) reading almost all the Single tax papers of the world and using my pen for the propagation of Henry George's ideas. My special task is to translate Single tax books and articles of importance, and to provide Foreign News for our little paper "Den lige Vej."

Dear Mr. Fels, I have had the opportunity (I think I may safely say: more than anybody else here in Denmark) to observe you in your world-wide and indefatigable activity for our great cause, and I have learned not only to admire you, but to love you

and to trust you. And so you may understand that I am very sorry you have retired from us, not so much for the sake of your money as for the sake of your inspiring personality, your ardent and self-sacrificing work for the equal right of all men.

Believe me, dear Mr. Fels, in writing to you it is my sole object to contribute to your true understanding and fair judgment of circumstances and persons here. If I don't succeed, it is my fault, of course, and if I do anything which displeases you, no one is to be blamed but I.

At any rate, I shall take the consequences.

— Of course you remember, that Mr S. Berthelsen and I, after having been at the Free Trade Congress in Antwerp, August 1910, met you and some friends of the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values, London, at the Committee's office rooms Westminster, and that Mr. Berthelsen produced a declaration concerning the administration of the Danish Joseph Fels Fund and the authority over same. This declaration which was to be signed by Mr. Berthelsen and me, reads as follows (translated from Danish):

» We agree to give the following declaration to Mr. Fels:

1. Mr. Fels has declared, that he has not given the Fund to the Henry George Society, but to the movement; but as this lacks a valid representation, we must consider the annual meeting of the Henry George Society the best organ for the election of a committee of 3-15 members to manage the fund for this year.
2. We hereby assume that the annual meeting in composing the committee will show proper consideration for those men outside the Society ^{who believe in the taxation of land values and} (especially ~~assimilated~~) who have been active in the service of the movement and consequently have a ~~most~~ claim for representation.
3. The committee alone has authority over the Fund, ~~which cannot enter into the means of the Society~~. Account is submitted ~~only~~

to Mr. Fels, ^{in confidence} after the figures have been audited by the Society."

-- The corrections and amendments (here made with red ink) were made according to your wishes. With respect to the clause (under 3.) "which cannot enter into the means of the Society" I remember, as if it had happened to-day, that, when you heard it, you immediately exclaimed: "Why? strike that out!" and taking your pencil you struck out the passage yourself. Then, with your own hand, you added these words to the declaration:

"Mr. Fels sincerely hopes that all bodies or societies who desire to bring in the reforms of Henry George will join up together."

In spite of this Mr. Beathelsen at the annual meeting of representatives of the Danish Henry George Society, at Odense, Sept. 11, 1910, tried to explain to the meeting, that in accordance to Mr. Fels' will the Fund ought to be kept separate from the means of the Henry George Society, and proposed the following resolution:

"Acknowledging that the Fels Fund is to be administered as separated from the means of the Henry George Society, and approving of the disposals made by the provisional committee of the Fund, this meeting of representatives resolves to elect a Committee for the Taxation of Land Values, consisting of the three presidents of the Society and twelve other members, elected by this meeting, to administer the means of both the old and the new Fels Fund for the year ending September 1, 1911, as well as other means which might be given to the same purpose."

Being perfectly sure that I had understood your meaning, and feeling obliged to act accordingly, I opposed the first passage of this resolution, and informed the meeting that Mr. Fels did not want the money of the Fund to be kept separate from the means of the Society, and proposed an amendment to the effect, that the ^{first} passage be omitted and the resolution be simply put as follows: "The meeting of representatives approves of the disposals made by the provisional committee of the Fels Fund and resolves to elect a Committee etc."

This was carried with a good majority (307 votes for my reso-

lution and 128 for Mr. Berthelsen's resolution.)

(As to this statement, I refer to the Official Report of the proceedings of the Meeting of Representatives at Odense, Sept. 11, 1910, in "Den lige Vej", October 1910, p: 10 and 11.)

- - As you know, by far the greater part of our troubles has come from the incessant strife pro and con Mr. Berthelsen's paper, "Ret" (Justice) which he pretentiously calls the "Organ of the Danish Henry George Movement", and which he year after year has attempted to force upon us as a paper to be subscribed to by the Society for all its members, - eagerly trying to keep down every effort to create another paper, which was not to be owned and controlled by one single person.

It has very often been asserted, that Mr. Berthelsen did not give those, who were not his friends, a fair and just treatment in his paper. However it is rather difficult to prove it, Mr. Berthelsen being a very clever and cunning penman and manager. - True it is, that he uses every occasion to serve and flatter his friends and helpers, and that he will silence down those who do not serve him, or, if he thinks fit, to try to knock them down or to prick them with "needles" now and again.

During the years 1904-1908 I was Mr. Berthelsen's friend and co-worker, and I gave several contributions to his paper ("Ret"). He then served me and flattered me; and he continued to do so as long as he found I could be of any use to him. But I lost my confidence in him and began to retire. Since that time, and especially since our journey to Antwerp and London, 1910, he has endeavoured to put me out of the play.

As to "Ret" and the treatment one may expect from this paper, I will state one single instance of my own experience. - You may call the matter of it insignificant; and insignificant, indeed, are such matters, until they are used as poisoned weapons in a strife that ought to be honest. May you most sincerely not to think that I am going to lament or to complain of Mr. Berthelsen's proceedings. I assure you, I do not complain at all, for I do not judge it a dishonour to be ill-treated by Mr. Berthelsen; he has been unfair to so many of our best and noblest companions. - But I am compelled to state a case

of my own, because I know these best.

- We have had some difficulty, in finding a good Danish word for the "Single Tax" or "Land Value Taxation". We wanted to get rid of the term "tax". Then, in 1906, the word "Jordskyld", which may be translated "Land Due" was proposed by one of our Singletaxers (Mr. Egens). I immediately accepted the word and have been constantly using it ever since. It has now become the most common Danish term for the Single Tax.

In "The Public" (Chicago) for October 10, 1911, Mr. C. M. Koedt of Chicago gave the following notice:

Danish Land Values Pamphlet.

"Jordskyld Reformen i Udlandet" (Land-Values-Due Reform in Foreign Countries), by P. Larsen, is published by the Committee for Land Values Taxation in Copenhagen, 1911. The author is a well-known Danish Singletaxer, who in highly intelligent and comprehensive manner describes the progress in the practical introduction of Land Values Taxation in the United States, Canada, England, Germany, Kiautschow in China, New Zealand, South Australia, Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales. The word "Jordskyld"—"Land due"—has a significance worth special notice. It was introduced some years ago into Danish single tax literature by Mr. Sophus Berthelsen, editor of "Ret," known to Singletaxers the world over. The word is an attempt to overcome the rather general idea that the Single Tax is just a mere taxation measure, by substituting "due" for "tax," thereby implying that the appropriation of the rental values of land by society is not at all a tax burden, confiscating property produced by labor, but rather a value due society because produced by its presence and activities, and that in taking it society thus simply takes its own.

C. M. K.

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I found it strange that in a notice of my pamphlet Mr. Berthelsen should be named as having introduced the word "Jordskyld" into Danish single tax literature; for, although I had for years been a careful and attentive reader of "Ret" I did not remember ever to have seen the word used by Mr. Berthelsen until I used it; and besides I knew, that Mr. Egens, who was an old Singletaxer, had proposed the word, also without being aware,

that it had been used formerly).

In a little letter I informed Mr. Koedt that his notice as to the introduction of the said word was not correct. In order to enquire upon the matter Mr. Koedt sent my letter to Mr. Berthelsen — and down came the deluge over me. Mr. Berthelsen succeeded to show that "Jordskyld" was an old Danish word, and that he himself had used it for the "single tax" (occasionally, of course) as early as in the winter 1901-1902, and since, in a leaflet, in 1906. This gave him a vantage-ground, from which he was able to beat me to pieces, and he did so from the bottom of his heart in a full four-page article

in "Ret" (the March issue 1912). I sent him an answer to be published in "Ret", and he really did publish it - three months later, in small letters, on the cover of the paper, but not without adding a very malicious and incorrect comment. And then further discussion of the matter was closed in the paper, it having at that time become so "insignificant" that there was no room for it.

- This is but a single case. But many a Singletaxer here in Denmark will be able to furnish similar instances of unfair treatment on the part of that man who more than anybody else here claims to be a propagator of Justice, that man, who claims to be, not a leader, but The Leader of the Henry George movement here in Denmark.

Let such personal controversies and disagreements be called trifling and trivial, yet they constitute an incessant impeachment for our work.

But trifling, at any rate, is not that, which I am now going to tell:

After our last annual meeting of representatives of the Henry George Society (at Holding, September 14, 1913) Mr. Berthelsen, finally seeing that he had irrevocably lost control of the Danish Henry George Society and had no more hope of reintroducing his paper, has not only withdrawn his name, but he now calls our old society "a private Henry George Society" ("Ret", September 1913) and obviously does all in his power to place obstacles in its way and, if possible, to dissolve or disorganize it. A few branches of the Society have just withdrawn, the most significant of which is the branch at Randers (in Jutland), which withdrew after having had a meeting with Mr. Berthelsen.

Mr. Berthelsen has also condescended to write private letters to members of the H.G. Society prevailing upon them to abandon the Society and subscribe to "Ret". He obviously aims to start a new organization; and he and his friends have already planned a new Danish Henry George Conference to be held this winter, which conference

has nothing to do with our ordinary annual Henry George Conference & Meeting of Representatives (in September).

I do not hesitate to say that the proceedings and the conduct of Mr. Berthelsen is a disgrace to the memory of Henry George. - The very fact that he is a disciple of this most noble master, is the greatest psychological puzzle I ever met with.

- - Before concluding this letter, I take the liberty to add one little thing more: A few weeks ago (in "The Border Counties Young Liberal", England, and "The Liberator", New Zealand, I saw your excellent letter to the Dean of..... Theological School, I was very much pleased with it, and translated it for a Danish-paper ("Nordsjællands Venstreblad"). In the last issue of "Ret" (Novemb.-Decemb. 1913) Mr. Berthelsen, under your portrait, uses my translation of the letter, but omitting my name (as the translator. - To be sure, in a little annotation, on the cover of the paper, he tells his readers that the article ("The Religion of Mr Fels") was published in "Nordsjællands Venstreblad" and translated by P. Larsen, but the words are so put, that no one can see, that it is the same translation, which Mr. Berthelsen has embodied in "Ret".

- "Little things!" you will perhaps exclaim. - Well, true! But:
Little drops of water,
little grains of sand
make the endless ocean
and the mighty land. -

- - Dear Mr. Fels! I have written this long letter to you, whom I admire and love, even at the risk of losing your benevolence and friendship. But I have had to do it. I am only sorry I have not been able to do it much better.

It is ~~but~~ very little importance what becomes of me. But it is of very great importance that you should not misconceive and mistrust our best and noblest Singletaxers.

Yours truly
P. Larsen.