

# Using tax subsidies to promote discrimination - the Her...

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I've found out who some of the sad people who read tax blogs rather than celebrate Christmas are. They're the staff of the [Center for Freedom and Prosperity](#) (CF&P) in the USA who issued a press release about me on Boxing Day. Surely they had better things to do over Christmas than spend their time away from their families misrepresenting the truth? Apparently not.

For the sake of the record, the press release is to be found [here](#). For the sake of correcting the misinformation within it let me add the following (on which, I give notice in advance, I will not be accepting comment from right wing groups, so don't bother to try):

1. I never sought the [debate with Senator Walker](#) to which CF&P refer. Others challenged him to debate with me, without asking me first whether I was willing to do so. When he accepted I was also happy to do so. He is more responsible than most for setting Jersey on the path to ruin on which it is now almost certainly irreversibly set. He is accountable for that as Chief Minister of the Island. It would have been churlish not to debate. But he changed his mind. Unsurprisingly some wished to call him to account for that, me included.
2. I did not seek a debate with Dan Mitchell of the [Heritage Foundation](#) and CF&P. He asked for a debate. I'm unsurprised. As his own press release notes, he's finding it difficult to find anyone credible who can be bothered to waste their time by engaging with him. So he thought he'd try me, and I'm pleased that he joins me with the likes of the EU, UN and OECD, but in truth the suggestion he makes that I act a spokesperson for any government or government funded agency is entirely wrong. Unlike the Heritage Foundation, which has reserves of [\\$137 million](#) according to its latest accounts, to create which it probably enjoyed tax subsidy of at least \$40 million or more, neither the Tax Justice Network or I have ever received state funding (although I have had the odd expense reimbursement).
3. The truth is, I did not turn Dan Mitchell down flat. I was sorely tempted to. My personal, economic and religious convictions all lead me to loath discrimination and

both the CF&P and Heritage promote discrimination. That discrimination is inherent in their desire to restructure the economy quite fundamentally to ensure that the rich get richer and the remaining 95% stay where they are. The evidence for this comes from Alvin Rabushka, whose work on flat tax they strongly promote, who said in recorded interview with me in February 2006, which he gave me permission to publish, that the only people who matter in any society are [the top 5%](#) of income earners. He said it is the duty of government and the rest of society to keep the rich happy. That's discrimination: he's calling for specially favourable treatment for an already privileged group. That's what Heritage and the CF&P set out to do. It's also why rich Americans give them so much money. I hate discrimination in all its forms. It follows that I loathe all that CF&P stands for. Of course I was inclined to say no. Any decent person would.

4. But I was generous. I said I would debate. But there were conditions:

- they paid ~~it was in~~ London or Jersey
- they had to disclose all their sources of funding, as TJN does

This seemed fair to me. TJN is an organisation committed to transparency. We are transparent, although we have allowed private donors but no other organisations to request anonymity if they wish for it. We'd have accepted the same from Heritage in return. But they sent their accounts and refused to do more.

As a result I declined to enter into a debate they organised. The reasons were simple. As I told Dan Mitchell:

*Your comments are profoundly disappointing. Both organisations for which you work are engaged in political lobbying. Their stated intentions are political. Despite this you refuse to disclose the identities of those who are providing the resources to fund this work. In consequence it is quite reasonable to believe that those funding you wish to interfere in the democratic process whilst wishing to be unaccountable within it. My position on this is simple: it is unethical, anti-democratic and in consequence wholly unacceptable to work in this way. A belief in freedom must require a belief in democracy. A belief in democracy is based upon the principle of accountability. You are not evidencing these beliefs.*

*I would add that in making both these observations I flatly reject your claim that your position is based on a respect for the right to privacy. Of course that is an important right. But it is one people forego when they seek to engage in the public domain of politics as you and your supporters are.*

*I regard transparency and accountability as crucial to civil society legitimacy. In the interests of proceeding with the debate, I repeat my request that you disclose the information requested in my earlier email.*

He never sent that information so that was the end of any chance of a debate on their

terms. But as Dan Mitchell well knows, and this is why I can say with complete sincerity that his press release is mis-information, I have not refused to debate with him. I have said that if he can find a reputable organisation that would like to arrange the debate so that I can be sure that it is run properly then I would happily engage in discussion. The precedent is clear. I no more like Alvin Rabushka's ideas on flat tax than I do Dan Mitchell's on tax competition. I would not have debated with Rabushka if he'd arranged it. But when I was asked to do so by reputable people in Slovenia working with the IMF earlier this year I did. And Mitchell should note, Rabushka argued for flat tax, and I argued against. [Slovenia has decided against flat tax](#). I make no personal claim as to my role in that, but what is clear is that Rabushka lost.

So, that's the reality. People like the EU, IMF, universities and the governments of many countries ask me to participate in discussion, and I do. The CF&P seem to have problems getting such invitations from such reputable sources. But if they can secure one I'll be there. But I stress - a right wing think tank is not a reputable location in my opinion. Reputation is based on a commitment to equity, justice and fair play. Anyone who promotes tax policies that discriminate against less well off people does not share those commitments, in my opinion. So don't bother to ask me to places that promote flat taxes, for a start. I won't show.

Accept that though and it's then over to you Dan. You wanted this debate. To me it's just an irritation. But if you can find someone to host it on these terms, I'll do it.