

Letter from Thomas E. Selfridge to Alexander Graham Bell, July 24, 1907, with transcript

Beinn Bhreagh . Victoria County . Cape Breton N.S.

Copy of a letter written by T. Selfridge commenting upon the proposition of Dr. Bell to form an organization (later known as the American Experimental Association) to aid in promoting the Art of Aviation. Read Monday Evening, July 29, 1907. Beinn Bhreagh, Wednesday, July 24, 1907

A suggested outline of an arrangement by means of which an Association may be formed for the promotion of Aerial flight; the membership to consist of Dr. and Mrs. A. G. Bell, capitalists, and Dr. A. G. Bell, J. A. D. McCurdy, F. W. Baldwin, T. Selfridge, and G. H. Curtiss, the active members and workers: The sole aim of the Association to be to get into the air with a heavier-than-air machine. The Association to continue in existence till the accomplishment of its object.

The capital to consist of the proceeds of the sale of a certain piece of property belonging to Mrs. A. G. Bell, the money previously devoted to this enterprise by Dr. A. G. Bell, and any other sums that may be donated to the Association, in case there should be any need of such to assure the successful conclusion of the enterprise. "The Aerial Experiment Association" would appear to be a suitable title.

An Association appears to be the most likely solution of this matter as it is almost the only one which will not in some degree destroy the individuality of the co-workers; something which must be carefully guarded against in an undertaking of this sort.

The existence of two patents, one in the name of Dr. A. G. Bell, and the other in the names of Dr. A. G. Bell and H. P. McNeil, which govern the method of construction which the

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Association will probably wish to use, need not be taken into account as the purpose of the Association is purely experimental.

To determine the policy which the Association is to follow, the members are to meet from time to time and settle among themselves, by vote 2 if necessary, what lines shall be pursued. For this purpose it might be suggested that Dr. Bell be given 3 votes, 2 to represent the capital invested and the other his proper vote as one of the co-workers, all the other members, McCurdy, Baldwin, Selfridge and Curtiss to have one vote each. In this way it will be possible to fully protect Dr. Bell's private interests, persevere the individuality of the separate associates, and permit the association to move steadily forward to its goal.

To carry on the work, let Mr. Curtiss, who has had more practical experience than any of the others, be appointed General Manager; Mr. Selfridge Secretary, that he may obtain a fuller insight into the details of affairs; the other three to be co-workers and advisers.

It will be necessary to compensate pecuniarily some of the members and it is suggested that Curtiss receive \$5,000, McCurdy and Baldwin each \$1,000 during the first year's work or till the accomplishment of the object if attained before the expiration of one year from the formation of the association. The other two members, Dr. A. G. Bell and Mr. Selfridge to receive no salaries, there being no necessity for same, the object being in no sense a commercial one; this matter of salaries to be taken up at the first meeting of the association. The association to be formed as soon as possible and the joint work started.

The above appears to cover the essential elements of the association proper.

If it should so happen that the work accomplished by the above association proves to be of commercial value, a company should then be formed to take up this side of the question as the association is to be dissolved upon the completion of its object "to get into the air." This 3 latter enterprise should be conducted by experienced promoters and established on a sound business basis. It would seem rather premature to discuss the matter at this stage

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but perhaps the following outline might indicate a basis upon which such a company might be formed.

Let the capital invested in the association be represented in the new concern by 51% of the stock, let each of the associates be represented by say 5% of the stock, the remaining 24% to be disposed of by vote, in other words as the capital may see fit.

The patents above mentioned to be leased by Dr. A. G. Bell to the concern after he has made a personal arrangement with H. P. McNeil as to the latter's share in the profits resulting from the use of the 2nd patent. Or the concern may be licensed by Dr. Bell and H. P. McNeil to use these patents.

As this matter is to be placed in the hands of business men it would be presumptuous to go further into the details of the company at this time.

Submitted to Dr. A. G. Bell by T. Selfridge July 26th. P. S. Any inventions brought out by the association should belong to it and not to any individual; the shares in any inventions to consists of say 3 parts for Mr. Bell and one part for each of the others or there may be any other arrangement of this the association may see fit to make. T. Selfridge