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Common

January 19, 1947

Dear Mrs. Latham:

I was very much interested by the COMMON CAUSE statement of principles which you sent to me.

The one division which I question a little is: "Help Defend American's Freedom by Helping Those Who Defend Freedom Abroad".

There is starvation and deprivation today in many places where Democracy is not practiced and yet I think it is only by showing that Democracy respects all human beings and is inherently humane, regardless of political beliefs, that we will set the example by which people can understand as a contract to the totalitarian philosophy. I would give priority to those whose need is greatest, but I would never mix need and relief with politics.

Very sincerely yours,

COMMON CAUSE, INC.

A Call for a New Birth of Freedom

Room 762 • 1775 BROADWAY • Circle 6-0087
NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

January 11th, 1947

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Counsel
Paul, Weiss, Wharton & Garrison

National Religious Council
Mr. William Montgomery Bennett
Director

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt
Hyde Park
Dutchess County, N. Y.

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

The enclosed statement can be read in eleven minutes, although it took almost two years to prepare. It is the result of hard and dedicated work on the part of men and women listed on this page who deeply value human freedom and the free way of life and realize the danger in which they now stand.

Common Cause is a militant citizen movement offering to the American people a definition of Democracy based on the needs of today; a re-statement of the great Purpose of America as envisioned by Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine; and a program of community action to implement these beliefs.

Common Cause proposes a set of American principles and definitions as a yardstick by which the individual citizen can measure decisions affecting human liberty both at home and abroad. We believe that America must bring forth - for the world - a great and militant democratic faith that will surpass in its sweep and power the faith of any totalitarian system.

It is our hope that Common Cause expresses the largely unspoken beliefs of the great majority of the American people - not merely an articulate segment or the controversial "right" and "left". We plan to build extensively in towns and communities all through the nation and through existing civic, educational and religious organizations. Common Cause can only be as strong as the action it arouses in the average man and woman.

I know that you will recognize the long-range far-reaching potentialities of Common Cause and I sincerely ask for your help and cooperation in seeing that its message reaches the maximum number of people. The release date is Monday, January 20th.

Sincerely yours,

Natalie Wales Latham

Mrs. Wales Latham

COMMON CAUSE

A CALL FOR A NEW BIRTH OF FREEDOM

I. America Has a Purpose

Our American Republic was dedicated in its origins to human freedom. In our most glorious moments we have fought for the extension of the principles of individual liberty and the rights of man throughout the world. The present age calls for a solemn rededication of the American people to their historic purpose. Common Cause is a national movement devoted to this end.

II. America Is Challenged

We in America today face the supreme challenge of our history. We are being driven by events to play a major, perhaps the decisive, role in shaping the course of civilization. Because of our great strength and the narrowed dimensions of the earth, the very survival of individual liberty and popular rule in the world rests in large measure with us.

At home, we face the task of achieving economic stability, security, and opportunity for all without sacrificing civil and political liberties. If we fail in this, we shall open the gates to chaos and despotism in America.

Abroad, we face the task of building a lasting peace on the foundations of justice and freedom for all peoples. If we fail here, we may be destroyed in an all-embracing catastrophe.

Both at home and abroad, we face Communism: an aggressive totalitarian movement purporting to bring security, equality, and peace to the peoples of the world through dictatorship. This movement has gained such strength that for the first time in its modern career democracy is challenged by a powerful rival for the idealism of the young and the hopes of the exploited and oppressed of the earth.

Both at home and abroad also, we face Fascism: a second aggressive totalitarian movement which by appealing to the worst in the human tradition and by setting religion against religion, nation against nation, and race against race would revive the military state and plunge all mankind again into war. Although the Fascist powers have been destroyed, the conditions of insecurity, frustration, and fear out of which Fascism came continue to ride the world.

Each of these totalitarian movements feeds on fear of the other. Each also loudly proclaims itself to be the only practicable alternative to the other. As a consequence many well-meaning citizens are driven into the Communist and Fascist ranks. Common Cause repudiates this false logic and presents a living democracy as the answer to both.

III. America Is Strong in Material Power

We stand at the very apex of our material power in history. In sheer physical might, in the fabulous productivity of our economy, we are without a close rival among the nations. It was this economy that made America truly the "arsenal of democracy" in the struggle against the Fascist states.

But our present relative position among the nations is fleeting. Never before have we occupied a place of such pre-eminence. Perhaps never again will our voice carry equal weight in the council chambers of the world. Both the opportunity and the responsibility of today may be gone tomorrow. We must act now. This is America's hour of destiny.

IV. America is Weak in Spirit

In spite of our physical might we lack vision and resolution. At this critical juncture in the affairs of mankind the voice of our democracy is feeble and confused. The cause of freedom is neglected and forsaken in its historic home. Amid the conflict of ideologies and the clash of systems we seem to lack the moral vigor of other days.

At a time when the democratic faith is on the defensive everywhere we are divided in our own house. Torn by the struggle for special advantage of organized groups and interests, weakened by class, sectarian, national, and racial prejudices, we are unmoved by any great common cause or passion. In our moral leadership at home and in the world we betray the promise of our history and the need of the hour.

V. America Must Bring Forth a Great Faith

We can turn back in peaceful competition the totalitarian threat in any and all of its forms. But we can do this, not by a blind policy of negation, nor by a timid policy of defense, but rather by a bold and positive policy of democratic affirmation and fulfillment - a policy devoted to making democracy work at home and helping it live abroad.

To achieve this end we must proceed swiftly to revive and strengthen our great heritage of freedom. We must formulate a body of common purposes and loyalties which transcend the limited interests of class, sect, nation, and race. We must bring forth a great and militant faith which will surpass in its sweep and power the faith of any totalitarian system.

VI. This Faith Is Democracy

Democracy is the social faith of America. But we must recall to our minds, in terms that cannot be twisted by tyrants, the true and full meaning of this fateful word which is on the lips of all peoples today. Common Cause proposes the following conception of the meaning of democracy.

1. Democracy means - PERSONAL WORTH: Every human being is precious in his own right and is always to be regarded as an end, never as a means merely. His protection and full development are the purpose and measure of social institutions, relationships, and doctrines. The state is made for man, not man for the state. Here is the foundation of all humane conceptions of life and the ultimate source of the other articles of our faith.

2. Democracy means - FREEDOM: All men should participate actively in selecting leaders, in shaping the laws, and in discharging the responsibilities of government. Every man should be free to think and speak, to write and create, to approve and criticise, to assemble and organize, to choose an occupation, to move from place to place, to improve his condition, to worship God as he chooses, to follow the dictates of his conscience, to pursue in his own way truth and happiness. Within the framework of democratic principles cultural and political minorities should be tolerated, respected, and valued as creative forces in history. A "democratic" one-party state is a self-evident but dangerous fraud. Freedom is the ancient, eternal, and implacable foe of totalitarianism and every form of tyranny over the bodies and minds of men.

3. Democracy means - EQUALITY: All men though differing in talents should be equal before the law and in the moral order. Regardless of class, creed, or color they should have the same rights, liberties, opportunities, and responsibilities. Democracy recognizes no races, castes, or orders commissioned by God or qualified by their own attributes to exploit, govern, or enslave their fellow human beings. Equality is the only enduring basis of justice, mercy, and fraternity among men.

Democracy means - RULE OF LAW: The structure and functions of government should clearly defined in constitutional provisions; the entire political process of elections, legislation, administration, and judicial decision should be conducted according to rules and principles freely established by the people. All individuals and minorities should be protected in their rights and liberties against the passion of mobs, the vengeance of party, the power of privilege, the tyranny of secret police, the caprice of officials, and the ambitions of madmen. Law is the indispensable guardian of freedom.

5. Democracy means - PUBLIC MORALITY: It means elementary standards of decency in the conduct of all public affairs. In the political struggle men should be guided by the canons of simple honesty, truthfulness, and intellectual integrity; in the exercise of power they should be just, humane, and merciful. Democracy condemns in principle the doctrinal immorality of totalitarianism, whether Fascist or Communist, which justifies as political "realism" the practice of falsehood, hypocrisy, deceit, and slander, of terrorism, deportations, tortures, concentration camps, labor batallions, and judicial murders. Without mutual trust and charity society itself must fall into decay and dissolution.

6. Democracy means - INDIVIDUAL OPPORTUNITY: It means a mobile and progressive society in which any man can make his way according to his own talents, inclinations, and beliefs - a society which makes available to all an abundance of opportunity in work, in health, in education, in social relationships, in human enlightenment, in all the arts and sciences of life. Democracy strives to insure to every individual through whatever means experience proves necessary the opportunity to develop himself to his full stature. By maintaining opportunity for all democracy becomes precious to all.

7. Democracy means - INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY: All men should be disciplined by a sense of common brotherhood, a devotion to the general welfare, and a love of truth and justice. If they employ their liberties merely to further their own selfish interests, if they are callous to wrongs and inequalities, if they are indifferent to the public good, they will surely sink back into bondage. Democracy surpasses all other social systems in its demands on the time and energy, as well as the virtue and understanding, of the citizen. Individual responsibility is the final test of human liberty.

In spite of our many failures, weaknessess, and shortcomings, our commitment to these principles in the past has been recognized throughout the earth and has given to us our unique place among the nations. Common Cause has been launched to renew and strengthen that commitment and to serve all who wish to take part in a great rebirth of democratic faith in America and the world.

Common Cause will strive without flagging to apply this conception of democracy to both domestic and foreign policy. It will draft a Social Charter for America which will outline concretely the great goals to be striven for at home during the coming years. It will keep these goals ever before the country and work unceasingly for their attainment. It will also draft a Foreign Policy Charter outlining the basic essentials of a just peace, and suggest the methods by which we may hope to undo the tragic mistakes of appeasement and win back by peaceful means the lost areas of freedom.

It will revive the Atlantic Charter and endeavor to apply its provisions to the building of a free and just world - free and just to the small as well as to the great, to the weak as well as to the strong. We believe that America, working closely with all governments committed to liberty, must struggle to achieve these aims with all of her moral, diplomatic, and economic resources, using every ounce of her bargaining power to extend the dominion of freedom on the earth.

WHAT IS COMMON CAUSE?

Common Cause is a force, not just another organization. It is a militant citizen movement carrying the banner of democracy. It is a job for you, as an individual; a project for your club or organization.

Common Cause is an old idea because its inspiration and foundations are found in the words of the men who wrote the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. It is new because it re-defines in fresh words the Purpose of America: how we can make it live today and defend it effectively at home and abroad.

Common Cause is significant because it articulates and pulls into focus the great unspoken sentiments which many men and women have been thinking all along. We believe that it articulates the silent thoughts of the great body of Americans who do not believe that the ideals and purpose of America proclaimed by Jefferson, or Paine, or Lincoln is expressed by the thinking of either the so-called right or left now so much publicized.

Common Cause welcomes all men and women who accept its purposes and who realize that the fate of human liberty in these critical times rests in large measure in the hands of the American people.

Common Cause proposes to engage in various forms of activity designed to clarify the meaning of democracy, to apply its principles to domestic and foreign policy, to support the struggle for human liberty both at home and abroad, and generally to prepare the American people for the stupendous role for which history has cast them.

BUILDING A FOREIGN POLICY BASED ON PRINCIPLE

Everybody in a democracy must help shape its policy; **must** understand it, believe in it, and back it to the limit with words and deeds. Our foreign policy must be firmly based on our Purpose as a nation. We are now engaged in a great War of Ideas which, if lost, will nullify the terrible sacrifices so freshly made to preserve freedom.

Issues which have a profound effect on the entire future of democracy and human freedom arise almost every day, often in the United Nations organization itself. As such issues arise, Common Cause will send you a brief statement of the situation, and a ballot, so that you, personally, can vote on, and take part in the most important struggle of ideas that has confronted the American people since the Revolution.

Judgment polls will also be conducted among Common Cause members to help achieve a common understanding of the great values for which we are to stand before the world. Major issues of domestic and foreign policy will be tested in terms of basic democratic values.

HELP DEFEND AMERICA'S FREEDOM BY HELPING THOSE WHO DEFEND FREEDOM ABROAD

The frontiers of freedom today rest in those countries which are struggling to preserve the free way of life and individual, religious, and national freedom under grueling totalitarian pressure. It is to the selfish, as well as to the humanitarian, interest of every American who prizes the free way of life to bring material and moral assistance and comfort to men, women and children who have suffered deprivation, starvation, and persecution because of their devotion to democratic principles.

The names and addresses of people in France, Italy, Greece, Austria, and other countries, and lists of the simple everyday necessities of life which they need so desperately, will be furnished to any member of Common Cause wishing to participate in the work. Many of these people, both Jews and Gentiles, are in the displaced persons' camps in Europe, unable to return to safety to the lands of their origin and unwelcome in the devastated countries to which they fled or to which they were deported. Many

them have suffered terribly even during the period when they have been under UNRRA, and their fate is now more uncertain than ever. Aid must be given to them, and homes must be found for them. The sacred right of asylum for political refugees must be upheld against totalitarian efforts to force their return.

THE FREEDOM BOOK CLUB

The Freedom Book Club has been set up for the purpose of giving wide publicity to articles, editorials and books which freshly and strongly express the ideals of freedom and democracy put forth in Common Cause. A board, composed of nationally known men and women, will choose the material each month. You can be of the greatest help in this important work by sending in to us anything printed in your local newspaper that you feel is worthy of wide distribution.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you believe in the statement of principles printed in this leaflet and are interested in what Common Cause hopes to accomplish, please write to us and tell us so. We hope you will write to us for more copies of this material for distribution.

Spread the doctrine - explain it carefully to ten of your friends and try to win their support. Ask them to do likewise with ten others.

Invite a few friends to get together at your home so that you can tell them about Commoh Cause and ask them to join. Every person is important. Discuss the situation in your town, city, or neighborhood that involves the principles and objectives of Common Cause and how you can better that situation through your new affiliation.

See the editor of your newspaper, show him the Common Cause material, if he has not already seen it, and ask for his cooperation in publicizing its principles and definitions in order to attract new members.

Call on the pastors of all churches and tell them about this movement which is so deeply identified with the continued existence of all religious faiths. Pastors may urge support of Common Cause principles from their pulpits. A national religious council representing all faiths has been organized on behalf of Common Cause.

See the principals and history teachers of your local school, highschool, or college and ask them to build a session or discussion period for students around the Common Cause statement of American principles and purpose.

Go to religious groups, women's clubs, and patriotic societies, labor unions, business associations, consumer groups, farmers, and to any other civic or educational organization in your community. Give them the Common Cause material and suggest that each appoint a chairman to represent this movement within their own membership. This is important, as Common Cause wishes to coordinate its activities with all other groups and organizations and to spread the message about America and freedom to all existing groups.

YOU ARE COMMON CAUSE

Common Cause is meant for the many, not the few. It is financed by no wealthy patron or special interest and is entirely non-partisan and non-political. Its support depends entirely on voluntary contributions from many persons, and six months' membership dues of $1.00 which will go to cover the cost of printing, postage, clerical work, and research involved in material Common Cause will send you. It will succeed if you who are reading this message care enough about the future of your country and the survival of democracy in the world to make this message your own and join us in recruiting others in the Fight For Freedom

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