December 16, 1946

My dear Mr. Lowry:

The more I meet and work with people from other countries, the more I realize that democracy means a different thing to different people according to the circumstances in which they live.

For me, for instance, democracy means equality of opportunity for an education; equality before the law; an equal participation in my government, and equality of economic opportunity according to my abilities and for all people a minimum of economic security and the right to some kind of a useful job. If we can not provide that then economic democracy is non-existent.

Democracy means freedom to worship as I see fit, to have freedom of expression of opinion and freedom of action as long as I do not advocate the overthrow of the government by force or interfere with the freedom of other people.

I believe that this is the type of democracy that we advocate for every citizen of the United States but I know that we have innumerable citizens who do not enjoy this type of democracy, but the fact that it is our ideal and that we strive toward it, gives all of our citizens hope and sets us ahead I think, of such nations as the Soviet who believe in a mixture of democracy which exceeds our at times in certain phases but which has a totalitarian side which I believe is a greater danger to the fundamental achievements which we hope for democracy, then our own failures in certain areas at the present time.

Very sincerely yours,
Mrs. Franklin Delano Roosevelt  
Hyde Park, New York  

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:  

In 1903 a group of businessmen met in Little Rock and formed a club known as the XV Club, the membership being limited to fifteen members. Every other week they meet in the home of one of its members to discuss subjects of importance. On the night of December 19th the other fourteen members are my dinner guests and the subject for discussion that night is "What Do You Mean by Democracy?".

I am writing twenty businessmen, professional, and political men over the nation to help me with this subject and I would appreciate so much if you would care to express a brief answer to our subject so that I might quote you that night.

Our group has as its members the Chief Justice of Arkansas's Supreme Court; president of Little Rock's largest bank; an outstanding attorney; owner of a radio station; editor of the Arkansas Gazette, the oldest paper west of the Mississippi; a planter; proprietor of a large milling firm; and men from other vocations and professions.

I know you are an extremely busy woman, but I know the XV Club would be very happy to have your answer as to "What Do You Mean by Democracy?".

Respectfully,

C. E. Lowry  
President

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