

July 22, 1957.

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Dear Swede:

The fact that you had to remain in the hospital such a short time encourages me to believe that your condition must have improved definitely and rapidly. While I had hoped to get out to Bethesda some time when Ibbey would be present, I am still delighted that you are not compelled to spend most of the summer in a hospital room.

Concerning my present situation, I think it is best described by merely saying "the grind goes on." I am repeatedly astonished, even astounded, by the apparent ignorance of members of Congress in the general subject of our foreign affairs and relationships. I realize that by this time I should accept, as a matter of course, Congressional reaction that seemingly reflects either this abysmal ignorance or a far greater concern for local political sentiment than for the welfare of the United States.

I am sure that this second possibility is not correct so far as the conscious attitude of the average Congressman is concerned. In the general case each of them thinks of himself as intensely patriotic; but it does not take the average member long to conclude that his first duty to his country is to get himself re-elected. This subconscious conviction leads to a capacity for rationalization that is almost unbelievable.

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In any event, right at this moment lack of understanding of America's international position and obligation accounts for the fact that we seem to be trying to make a national hero out of a man who shot a woman -- in the back at something like ten to fifteen yards distance.

As quickly as this incident became a popular one in some parts of the isolationist press, it was taken up by dozens of Congressmen who "viewed with alarm" and were "shocked and distressed" at the injustice done to this great soldier and citizen.

We have even had a serious attempt made to force me to denounce our Status of Forces treaties. These treaties, as you know, are fair and just to Americans serving abroad and are the only means by which we retain jurisdiction in most offenses committed. Because they establish a reasonable jurisdictional balance between ourselves and the host country, they are at the very foundation of our defensive alliances. To denounce them would make us completely isolationist and force us to abandon practically every base we have abroad.

Of course there are people who believe that the United States would not only be secure but would greatly prosper by withdrawing into a fanciful "Fortress America." I say fanciful for the reason that any sensible man knows that there can be no such thing as security in isolation, no matter if our armed forces were multiplied three-fold.

This same unreasoning attitude is reflected in the constantly repeated effort in Congress to slash mutual security funds.

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Again and again I have explained to individuals and to the public that, as of this moment, our mutual security operations represent America's best investment. Through them we are able to keep down the direct costs of our own military establishment. More than this, we are increasing the consuming power of many friendly nations and helping to build up future markets for our rapidly expanding productive capacity.

Last year our excess of exported goods over imported was something on the order of nine billion dollars. Subtract from this all of the funds that we currently send out to aid the military establishments and economies of our friends and we still have a comfortable surplus. It is quite clear that except for the funds we have spent in the past in order to give help to economies in Europe and in Asia, there would not be the purchasing power in a number of countries to buy from us.

Some people worry that the long range competitive position of the United States will be damaged if we help now to build up the productive capacity of others. Some day this might be a problem. But there are two main points to remember.

(a). If other countries improve industrially their standards of living will usually go up. This means that in the normal case their wage scales will begin to rise and eventually will come closer and closer to our own. Consequently we will still have the competitive advantage of our deeper experience in management, production and, we like to think, in inventiveness and imagination. In the meantime we will have expanding markets.

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While you may argue that, in the case of Japan, increasing industrialization has raised living standards very slowly indeed, I think that as of today labor would be in a far better position in that country if their society had been a free one rather than a dictatorship.

(b). Before any of the underdeveloped countries can reach a position where they can export to others, on a competitive basis with the United States, many years must elapse and during that period their purchasing power will multiply rapidly. We, if we are wise, will share prominently in that increasing market. This applies to all of South America, Africa, and to portions of Asia, particularly in the Mid East.

All this, of course, is nothing but a by-product of a process which has as its principal purpose the strengthening of freedom and the gradual exhaustion of Communism in the world. I merely refer to it to express my belief that both in the short term and in the long term our mutual security program will advance our country's best interests.

Undoubtedly I have written to you a number of times on the subject of "Civil Rights." I think that no other single event has so disturbed the domestic scene in many years as did the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 in the school segregation case. That decision and similar ones earlier and later in point of time have interpreted the Constitution in such fashion as to put heavier responsibilities than before on the Federal government in the matter of assuring to each citizen his guaranteed Constitutional rights. My approach to the many problems has been dictated by several obvious truths:

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(a). Laws are rarely effective unless they represent the will of the majority. In our prohibition experiment, we even saw local opinion openly and successfully defy Federal authority even though national public opinion then seemed to support the whole theory of prohibition.

(b). When emotions are deeply stirred, logic and reason must operate gradually and with consideration for human feelings or we will have a resultant disaster rather than human advancement.

(c). School segregation itself was, according to the Supreme Court decision of 1896, completely Constitutional until the reversal of that decision was accomplished in 1954. The decision of 1896 gave a cloak of legality to segregation in all its forms. As a result, the social, economic and political patterns of the South were considered by most whites, especially by those in that region, as not only respectable but completely legal and ethical.

(d). After three score years of living under these patterns, it was impossible to expect complete and instant reversal of conduct by mere decision of the Supreme Court. The Court itself recognized this and provided a plan for the desegregation of schools which it believed to be moderate but effective.

The plan of the Supreme Court to accomplish integration gradually and sensibly seems to me to provide the only possible answer if we are to consider on the one hand the customs and fears of a great section of our population, and on the other the binding effect that Supreme Court decisions must have on all of us if our

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form of government is to survive and prosper. Consequently the plan that I have advanced for Congressional consideration on this touchy matter was conceived in the thought that only moderation in legal compulsions, accompanied by a stepped-up program of education, could bring about the result that every loyal American should seek.

I think that some of the language used in the attempt to translate my basic purposes into legislative provisions has probably been too broad. Certainly it has been subject to varying interpretations. This I think can be corrected in the Congress.

But I hold to the basic purpose. There must be respect for the Constitution -- which means the Supreme Court's interpretation of the Constitution -- or we shall have chaos. We cannot possibly imagine a successful form of government in which every individual citizen would have the right to interpret the Constitution according to his own convictions, beliefs and prejudices. Chaos would develop. This I believe with all my heart -- and shall always act accordingly.

This particular quarrel is not completely devoid of some amusing aspects. For example, a violent exponent of the segregation doctrine was in my office one day. During the course of his visit he delivered an impassioned talk on the sanctity of the 1896 decision by the Supreme Court. At a pause in his oration I merely asked, "Then why is the 1954 decision not equally sacrosanct?" He stuttered and said, "There were then wise men on the Court. Now we have politicians." I replied, "Can you name one man on the 1896 Court who made the decision?" He just looked at me in consternation and the subject was dropped.

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I suppose at the moment a problem of possibly even greater importance to us is the threat of inflation. Indeed it has passed the point of mere threat, as evidenced by the fact that in the last year we have had about a four percent rise in living costs. Since we had in the first three and a half years of this Administration succeeded in holding this rise to under one percent, the present situation shows that accumulated pressures are at last forcing prices up -- or if you want to put it another way, the dollar down.

There are so many contributory causes to inflation that it seems to be idle to pick out any one as the real culprit. Nevertheless many people try to do this. One man will wail about the wage-price spiral. Another lays everything to government spending. Still another will blame unlimited consumer credit, while others find banking policies to be wholly to blame.

Actually all these factors and even more enter into the problem. Even worse, not everybody acts consistently. Again consider the Congress. Suddenly convinced that governmental expenditures were too high -- which they are -- Congress entered upon a great economy drive. This it did under the belief that this subject would remain popular for so long that no better record could be taken to the voter in the fall of 1958 than one of consistent voting against expenditures.

This drive was underway long enough to provide opportunity for speeches by almost every individual member of the Congress, but by the time the first round was over,

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some of the boys began to wake up to the fact that a good many pressure groups wanted to dig a little deeper into the Federal treasury. As a result, in the field of housing Congress insisted upon putting a billion dollars more in the authorization bill than the Administration had requested. On top of that, Congress is in the process of passing a pay raise for mailmen that will give them a twelve percent increase even though Congress is well aware of the fact that this will practically compel raises for the entire classified civil service. This vastly increases Federal expenditures. Worse than this, there can be little doubt that the industrial wage-price spiral would get a terrific upward jolt from any such action on the part of the Federal government. But in voting as he does the Congressman feels that he is winning votes for himself. So out the window goes his concern about the effect of government expenditures on inflation.

In the same way, I doubt that there is any Congressman who fails to realize that so-called cheap money likewise has a stimulating effect on inflation. Yet he is willing to expose the country to the ravages of inflation so long as he can make a showing that he is for "cheap money for the little fellow."

I know that you will understand I am not criticizing all Congressmen. I am talking mainly about those who strive for the headlines by reckless and impulsive statements. Indeed in the normal case the average Congressman, when met individually, seems to be a perfectly logical and high-minded individual. It is usually when he gets to operating in the mass with opportunities for making rash and unwise statements that we gain such a bad impression of his capabilities.

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This letter is far too long -- you will be worn out with its reading. In any event, when I started my chief purpose was merely to express the great hope that you were improving as rapidly as your short stay in the hospital seemed to indicate you would. Everything between this paragraph and the beginning represents only the meandering reflections of an individual who has daily to use up more than a normal ration of his sense of humor in order to keep right side up. Possibly I am something like a ship which, buffeted and pounded by wind and wave, is still afloat and manages in spite of frequent tacks and turnings to stay generally along its plotted course and continues to make some, even if slow and painful, headway.

Give my love to Ibby and, as always, the best to yourself.

As ever,

Captain E. E. Hazlett,  
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