

Newport, Rhode Island,
September 24, 1957.

Dear Al:

It is difficult but necessary to learn that anyone in public position must expect criticism, some of it based upon stupidity and ignorance, and even at times, deliberate misrepresentation.

You and I know that I had no part whatsoever in having you appointed to the head of the Red Cross. In fact, so far as I can recall, no one even asked me for a recommendation. We know that the Status of Forces Treaties were not negotiated independently of the military; in fact you and I were serving in the military at the time and we know that the Army was desperately anxious to get them enacted. Such knowledge as this makes you want to strike back at the perpetrators of such falsehoods.

It is better, I think, to learn to ignore the Clarks and the Lewises, remembering that such people are trying to achieve headlines and have discovered that it is far easier to do it by the demagogic method of attacking something that is constructive and practical, and by appealing to emotion and prejudice.

So take a relaxed stance when in the batter's box and hit them as you see them!

As ever,

P.S.: Thanks for your suggestion that I come back to Washington. From the beginning of the Arkansas trouble I have thought about the matter, but I feel about as follows:

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The White House office is wherever the President may happen to be. To rush back to Washington every time an incident of a serious character arose would be a confession that a change of scenery is truly a "vacation" for the President and is not merely a change of his working locale. This is untrue. I have never been away from Washington when the important problems did not follow me and the necessity for making the decisions remain with me.

Another portion of my thinking involves the idea that I do not want to exaggerate the significance of the admittedly serious situation in Arkansas. I do not want to give a picture of a Cabinet in constant session, of fretting and worrying about the actions of a misguided governor who, in my opinion, has been motivated entirely by what he believes to be political advantage in a particular locality.

The Federal government has ample resources with which to cope with this kind of thing. The great need is to act calmly, deliberately, and giving every offender opportunity to cease his defiance of Federal law and to peaceably obey the proper orders of the Federal court. In this way the actions of the Executive in enforcing the law -- even if it becomes necessary to employ considerable force -- are understood by all, and the individuals who have offended are not falsely transformed into martyrs.

On the other hand, for a number of reasons I wish I were back there. My work would be a lot easier to do.

D.D.E.

General Alfred M. Gruenther