

19 Appleton St.,
Cambridge, Mass.

Dec. 7, 1961

Dr. Leo Szilard
Hotel DuPont Plaza
Washington 6, D.C.

Dear Dr. Szilard:

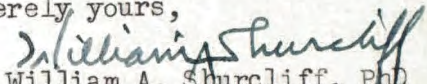
I heard the last part of your talk at Harvard a few weeks ago and have just read your Nov. 14 pamphlet "Are We on the Road to WAR?"

It seems to me that, essentially, you propose creation of a group of clear-thinking people to advise our government (in calm, sympathetic, yet definite way) on long range policies to preserve the free world and avoid a major war, and you propose means of bringing strong and legitimate political pressure to bear on our congressmen to get them to advance those policies.

It seems to me that you avoid various pitfalls. Unlike SANE you don't mistake a side issue (e.g., fall-out; shelters) for a main issue. Unlike various merely frightened people, you don't shut your eyes and bawl "Peace! Peace!"; you boldly propose grappling with the truly adult question: just how can we achieve peace? Unlike the many persons who seek a scapegoat and blame Russia almost 100%, and unlike those who seek a scapegoat and find a strange satisfaction in presuming our own government to be largely at fault, you recognize that the atomic age rivalry is itself the villain; the dilemma is a very serious one; there simply is no simple solution; to find a solution will take hard thinking by intelligent persons -- not just any intelligent persons, but persons accustomed to thinking unemotionally and disinterestedly.

I enclose a check for \$100.00 to indicate my interest. And if you really do get a group together and demonstrate some potentiality of making significant progress, I will probably donate \$1000. promptly and 2% of my salary too.

Sincerely yours,


William A. Shurcliff, PhD

PS: I had the pleasure of meeting you when I traveled to Chicago in 1944 or 1945 as Senior Technical Aide (OSRD) to Dr. Richard C. Tolman and his Committee on Post-War Planning on Nucleonics. I worked for many years at Polaroid Corp.; am now at Cambridge Electron Accelerator, Harvard U.

PPS: I have found that physicists who attend the Greater Boston Branch of FAS agree on the ultimate goal (peace) but often disagree diametrically as to the means (e.g., pacifism; strong missile system; giving in; heaping abuse on Congress or the President; etc.). The algebraic sum of their recommendations is zero. I.e., ~~stale~~ a stalemate. Hope you can somehow select, for your group, men predisposed not merely to one goal but to one general class of means.

Carbon copy to: Michael Brower,
3 Dana St., Cambridge 38, Mass.

Dec. 17, 1961

Dr. Leo Szilard,
Hotel DuPont Plaza,
Washington 6, D.C.

Dear Dr. Szilard:

Here is the revised check, made out to Univ. of Chicago. (\$100.)

Reflecting on yesterday's excellent meeting at Harvard Law School, I have come up with several thoughts or hopes. May I mention them?

1. I hope that, among the qualities you seek in people to be picked for the top groups, you will include flexibility, patience, good-humor, and brevity of speech. In some local FAS conferences, one or two men lacking these qualities sometimes ruin the conferences; the men are bright, devoted, etc., but they lack "conference good manners" and somehow drown all progress in an atmosphere of vehemence, verbosity, confusion. In a hospital operating room, the homely virtue of cleanliness is a must. Similarly, in a conference room concerned with mankind's survival, good conference manners are a must. Miraculously, everyone at yesterday's meeting displayed excellent manners, - a tribute, incidentally, to you, the chairman.

2. I presume you should explicitly delimit the scope of your movement, in order to avoid conflict on lesser issues, and to avoid appearing identical in scope to FAS, Foreign Policy Assn., SANE, etc. Desegregation, better schools, Fed. support of schools, loyalty oaths, civil liberties, are important questions; but they are not central to your issues. They would blur the image of your movement. Yesterday's conversations failed to suggest any delimiting. I trust you have limits in mind. That which has no limits is not a movement but a soup.

3. I hope you can state the essence of your movement. Yesterday, I sensed three conflicting essences: abolishing war; promulgating three specific plans; creating a wise and influential group of scientists.

To me, this last one is ~~the~~ the crucial one. That is, to me the essence of your movement is the creation of a group of famous and wise scientists, supported by 2%-of-income gifts direct from members to ^{recommended} candidates for Congress. I urge you to cling to all of this. Let me explain.

Scientists are identifiable as such. And they have glamor, to John Doe. You are capitalizing on this. If you were to dilute the group with lawyers, clergymen, etc., the impact is lost; the group then has the same neutral color one finds in the groups controlling the Foreign Policy Assn., SANE, ~~the~~ World Federalists, etc.

For John Doe to contemplate giving 2% of his income is thrilling, dramatic, a kind of real dedication. If you say to him "Well, how about just giving \$10?", the thrill is gone. He might as well be subscribing to the National Geographic, or giving to the Boy Scouts. Let's have N dedicated members, not 5N luke warm ones. The thrill in buying the Encyclopedia Britannica is that you buy the whole darn thing.

Your plan is that most John Does will send their gifts direct to particular candidates they like (after briefing by ~~the~~ your group). This is wonderful. It gives John Doe the thrill of acting directly, not through some intermediary. Also, he knows that none of the money will go to some issue he disapproves. (When he gives to SANE, SANE may spend it tomorrow on some item he is cold to.). The candidate gets the money in hundreds of different envelopes; no election laws are violated; there is no remote, money-rich machine to be lampooned by opposing candidates.

* * *

Finally, may I say that I think that your set of three best ideas (re bombs, food, etc.) are not the essence of your movement. Ideas come and go as the world situation changes. Ideas have pros and cons. ~~Yxxx~~ Ideas are the coins of the mint. But the mint itself is the thing.

Sincerely,

William A. Shurcliff
William A. Shurcliff

Washington, D. C.
March 3, 1962

Wm. A. Shurcliff
Harvard Electron Accelerator
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Shurcliff:

The attached letter is meant for you and those other whose names are listed in the memo "The Next Step". I should be very grateful to you for reading the attached letter and the enclosures, and for advising me as soon as possible whether you are willing to serve as an Associate.

I hope very much that you will not disqualify yourself from serving on the Board of Directors of the Council.

Sincerely,

Leo Szilard

Hotel Dupont Plaza
Washington 6, D. C.
Telephone: HUDSON 3-6000

Enclosures

P.S. I am enclosing the revised and final version of my speech, which will be printed in the April issue of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists.

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