

L. Szilard
July 1948

DRAFT OF LETTER

To Whom It May Concern:

It seems to me that we are all witnessing these days the opening acts of one of the greatest tragedies of modern times. The men to whom the responsibility of establishing peace has been delegated have apparently not understood the issue with which the world is faced today. Why this is so, I do not know. Perhaps they are too old to comprehend the meaning of the atomic bomb. Perhaps past experience makes it difficult for most statesmen to think in terms other than those of foreign policy in the narrow sense of the word.

The peace is being lost today, and it is being lost by default.

In a sense, those of us who feel like myself in this matter have nowhere to go. At present there is no organization in existence to which we could rally, which would regard a constructive approach to the problem of peace as the sole issue and which would display a clear conception concerning the essential prerequisites of a stable peace.

In the last few months I have had conversations with a number of men of whom one might naturally think as heading an organization such as the present situation would seem to require. I found most of them deeply concerned, and many of them willing to give a considerable fraction of their time and attention to serving an adequate movement aimed at the establishment of enduring peace.

But can such a movement be in fact created? And above all, can such a movement be created among those who, by virtue of their education, are able fully to understand the situation with which we are faced? Is there among us a sufficient number of people willing to put up an effective fight against the present trend of events, a fight for an adequate attempt at establishing real peace in the world? If such a movement were started, would it snowball, or would any effort in this direction necessarily peter out?

No one seems to be able to answer these questions with any degree of certainty. _____ has therefore agreed to set up a poll among the students of the University of Chicago. Your cooperation in this study ^{would} ~~will~~ be appreciated. Its outcome might determine whether a serious attempt will in fact be made to set up an organization of the kind described in the enclosed questionnaire.

Please note that this is not an invitation for you to join any organization, but rather a poll for the purpose of determining whether or not it is in fact possible to set up an adequate organization at the present time.

LEO SZILARD

DRAFT

L. Szilard
June 24, 1948

QUESTIONNAIRE

This inquiry is addressed to those who want to see the United States adopt a constructive policy which would have a fair chance of leading to the establishment of real peace. The attached memorandum attempts to describe the beliefs and sentiments which such a group might have in common, and you are asked to read it before giving your answers.

The purpose of the present inquiry is to determine whether it would be possible, with such a group serving as a base, to set up an organization capable of creating a mental atmosphere in the U.S. conducive to the establishment of enduring peace.

The main task of the organization would consist in clarifying in the public mind the fundamental concepts upon which the foreign policy of the U.S. would have to be based, if it is to have a fair chance of leading the world to peace.

The organization would address itself primarily to the intellectual leaders of the community. It would operate through

1. Speeches given on the campuses of the major universities throughout the months of September to December 1948
2. Personal contact and conferences with leaders of religious and civic organizations, publishers and editorial staffs of newspapers, newspaper columnists and radio commentators
3. Personal contact with the Presidential candidates, and others who may be in key positions to influence policy formation, including those who have special influence on the outcome of the elections
4. Press releases and press conferences in which the group would continually elucidate, comment upon and evaluate any important action taken by the U.S. government which has a direct bearing on the issue of peace.

(Elucidation of the probable scope, duration, and geographical limitations of a war which the U.S. and Russia might be engaged in fighting with each other if of the present trend continues may come within the scope ~~xxx~~ proposed activities of the organization, because of the need for removing the misconceptions which prevail

at present in this field.)

In setting up the organization/^{one}would have to bear in mind that it might become advisable for the organization to act as a political action group in future elections.

The organization which is visualized would consist of 15 to 30 Trustees, drawn from among persons who are nationally known, Officers appointed by the Trustees, who would be in direct charge of all activities of the organization; and Associate Members, whose number would be limited to 100,000. It would be the function of the Trustees to formulate the platform and policy of the organization, and to appoint the Officers. Persons who are in agreement with the platform and policy and who have confidence in the ability of the Trustees effectively to carry out the task of the organization would be eligible to join as Associate Members. Interchange of views between the Trustees and Associate Members would be maintained, and the participation of the Associate Members would, according to the ability of each one, be enlisted in the activities of the organization.

It is thought that:

- a. Associate Members should be asked for a rather high membership fee (perhaps \$20.00 per year, \$10.00 or an equivalent in services for students)
- b. that applicants for membership should be required to transmit three further applications for membership within two weeks after filing their own applications. (This rule would hold for the first 25,000 applicants only, since the membership list would be closed upon reaching a limit of 100,000.)

Assuming a favorable response, the above provisions under (a) and (b) might lead to a rapid growth of the organization and to a stable financial position. Also, the adoption of these provisions might tend to select members who feel strongly on the issue, and have some measure of influence in their respective local communities.

Please read the enclosed memorandum carefully, since it attempts to describe the beliefs and sentiments that such a group might share. Having read it, please answer the questions below:

1. Are you in general agreement with the beliefs and sentiments expressed in the enclosed memorandum, i.e, do you agree with it not necessarily in detail, but as a point of departure for seeking to determine the essential requirements for the establishment of enduring peace?
2. If an organization as outlined above were created, if 15 to 30 persons whose names command nationwide respect agreed to serve as Trustees, if you were in agreement with the platform and policy formulated, and if you had confidence in the Trustees' ability to carry out effectively the task of the organization, would you then wish to file application for membership, under the conditions stated above under (a) and (b)?
3. List 3 to 5 persons whose names you would like to see included in the Trustees of such a group
4. Are you willing to help in this poll by polling within two weeks 3 of your friends? (Additional copies of this questionnaire can be obtained at _____ and you are expected to pick up there three copies for transmission to your friends if your answer to this question is "Yes")

Please note that this is not an invitation for you to join any organization, but rather a poll for the purpose of determining whether or not it is possible at this time to set up an organization of the kind described.