

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
CHICAGO 37 · ILLINOIS
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL THOUGHT

August 22, 1949

Professor Leo Szilard
Stanley Hotel
Estes Park, Colorado

Dear Leo:

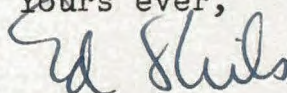
It is extremely nice to know that your vacation is going well and that you are resting, recreating yourself, and working, all on the same days. I am decreating myself and working, not resting, and that is a bad mixture. All of my affairs are still in as much a muddle as before. The blackguards at the School of Economics do not want to let me off this autumn and I am in a furious rage against them but unfortunately cannot get my hands on them. I am angry enough to resign under a barrage of insults to them but I don't know quite yet what I'll do. Perhaps you have an opinion.

Do you know anything of a French physicist named Leprince Ringuet of the University of Paris? Our University is establishing an exchange system with that University and the latter has suggested for their first gift to us this gentleman, whom they put forward as an eminent physicist. I have been commissioned to find out from you and from some of the other physicists whether he is a good boy as a scientist and whether we should accept the Parisian suggestion or ask for a substitute. I'd be most grateful if you would let me know about this as soon as possible.

I suppose you know about the death of Goldsmith. The Bulletin is sailing in the soup again and we shall probably reopen the matter with the University as soon as you come back. Goldsmith was one of the opponents of affiliation with the University, and although we lose very much personally and in the operation of the Bulletin by his death, we are at least now a bit freer to take up the matter again.

With most affectionate regards,

Yours ever,



Edward A. Shils

EAS:AW

1155 East 57th Street
Chicago 37, Illinois
July 24, 1954

Mr. Edward Shils
Social Science Building
University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Shils:

I told you I would send you a memo of the subject of our last conversation. I understand that your group is mainly interested in concerning itself with techniques of investigation of human behavior and that you might have a total number of fifty participants at any one time. My sense of proportion is somewhat disturbed by this. It is obvious that the species might vanish in the next fifty years or so unless we put to good use as fast as we can the limited insight into its behavior which we already possess. It seems to me there are three relevant areas of thought which might be promising and I will say a few words about them further below. But others might have other ideas and the thing to do it seems to me would be to try to get together for a month or six weeks as soon as possible a group of men who have imagination and who are concerned about the unsolved problems of our times and see if they can reach a meeting of the minds on the following points:

What are these problems which are in urgent need of clarification? Do we know enough to attack them successfully? And, can we find the men who by natural inclination would want to think about these problems and who could be brought together for a period of a few years?

Let us first of all give you a list of names for the group which might be brought together for four to six weeks. It is a somewhat hasty and tentative selection which you or others should be able to improve on.

Colin Clark, Oxford
 Madariaga, Oxford
 Isaiah Berlin, Oxford
 DeJouvenel, Paris
 Ronald Syme, Oxford
 T. E. Uiley, London

Pierre Auger, Paris
 E. R. Dodds, Cambridge
 T. L. Webster
 Antonia Moseliano, London
 Havelock, Harvard Univ.
 Raymond Aaron, Paris

A number of these were taken from a list which you gave me and of those I have no personal knowledge so you will have to defend them in case of need.

There is of course no telling with what such a group of imaginative people may come up but in the meantime I would like to mention three problems which are facing us now or with which we may be confronted before the century is over.

1. It will be quite difficult to progress toward an orderly world from here on unless we can develop forms of democracy which are suitable for the Government of undeveloped areas. The Parliamentary form of Democracy is not likely to fill the bill. You can imagine other forms of Government no less democratic in the true sense of the word which have a much better chance of success. It is not likely ^{however} ~~that~~ that one can, come up with a universal solution. It is more likely that different forms will have to be recommended for the different areas which are involved depending on the social organization and the culture pattern of the area. One should think that if really good ideas can be evolved in this field of thought it is conceivable that the Colonial Office might be drawn into the discussion and that one or the other of the plans might be tried out within the British Colonial Empire before long.

2. To my mind it is as yet impossible to improve very much on the forecast of H. G. Wells which he gave in his book, *The World Set Free*, that he wrote in 1913. In this book he describes the discovery of artificial radio activity which he puts into the year 1933, the year in which it was in fact discovered. The development of atomic energy for industrial purposes and atomic bombs follows and a world war in which most cities are destroyed by atomic bombs occurs in 1956--the

year in which it might, in fact, break out. This is followed by an attempt to set up a world government.

It seems to me that unless we face the issue of a world government right now we might be placed in a position where statesmen will grope around in the dark for thoughts as yet unborn.

We ought
~~If we were~~ to clarify our minds on the issue of what the real function of a world government ought to be in the first fifty years of its existence, I believe we ought not to fritter away our energies by trying to draft a constitution, e.g., by trying to settle the question of how the laws should be made under which the world will live, but rather we ought to try to describe a set of universally acceptable principles of international justice by spelling out in detail what the laws would be under which the world might be willing to live at least for the first fifty years following the third world war. Because we are accustomed to seeing a steady output of new laws by Congress and because we are inclined to think of the government of the world as something resembling the federal government of the United States, we are likely to have a false conception of the real problems which the operation of a world government would involve. I believe this is a problem on which the meeting of the minds is possible. It is easier to reach and has greater significance than would be a meeting of the minds on the issue of a world constitution.

3. The shortcomings of the political systems under which the highly developed nations operate become more and more disturbing and dangerous as the function of government becomes more and more important. It is not likely that these shortcomings can be remedied by far reaching changes in the constitution because of the great tenacity of existing political organizations. But in case of another world war some of the nations might be willing to adopt a different political system rather than go back to the old political system under which they were unable to avoid being drawn into the holocaust. This might very well hold for the

United States which during the third world war would almost certainly have to operate under a military government and which if the war lasts long enough might show little inclination to return to the political system that people will then consider to have failed. The need of the hour might be to have available to choose from a number of different political systems carefully thought out, democratic in the best sense of the word, and better adapted to modern conditions than the political system under which we are operating at present.

These are the three problems which I personally have in mind and which I have listed here in the order of their urgency.

I wonder whether your group would not be better balanced if instead of having fifty men concern themselves with methods, have a group of 35-40 men in this category and maybe 10-15 men concentrating on some problem of their choice such as I have listed above or some other such problem that is considered important. These 10-15 men in contrast to the others would not be concerned with finding new methods to give us new insight but they would be concerned to do what can be done with the insight that they already possess.

Let me know what you think about all this and if you get any response from others, please let me know it also.

Yours,

Leo Szilard

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August 1, 1957

TO: Dr. Edward Shils

FROM: Leo Szilard

Memorandum concerning the advancement of science in India

Because India is a country which is not industrialized and in which industrialization will proceed at a moderate pace, the number of physicists who can find industrial positions will increase only very slowly. No greater disservice could be done to the development of physics in India than to increase the number of university positions at a too rapid rate in the near future and to fill them with young people. For clearly as long as there are only few industrial positions for physicists, any student, who chooses to take up physics as his profession, will have only one career open and that is the career of teaching at a university. If most teaching positions at the universities are filled by young people who will stay in their positions until they are sixty-five, then clearly for all practical purposes physics teaching as a career will not be open to gifted students who may take up physics in years to come.

I believe that in these circumstances one should seriously consider creating in India one first-class graduate school for physics. At many universities in America, England and Germany the retirement age of a professor is sixty-five. If the graduate school of which I speak were established at a location where the physical climate is attractive as, for instance, in Bangalore, it should be possible to persuade some of the outstanding teachers, who are about to retire or who have just retired, to join such a graduate school.

An outstanding example of the kind of man who might be persuaded to accept such a position, and who would be exceedingly valuable, is Professor Erwin Schroedinger, who has recently returned from Dublin to Vienna to teach at the University there for one more year, and who is about to re-

tire. He is a Nobel prize winner and one of the best teachers in physics. Men of this quality who are in his situation would hardly want to go to India if they were all scattered at various institutions, but they might seriously consider going to India if many other men of their own class were all concentrated at the same graduate school.

All of these men have a modest retirement income, many of them not enough to live on comfortably in America or Europe, but their modest income would go much further in India and, in addition, they would receive there the customary salary of an Indian professor. In this manner they could live comfortably in a pleasant climate and be in a stimulating intellectual atmosphere -- to a great extent of their own making. If there are enough of them present, the impact of their personalities on the students could be very great.

The subjects covered might well be extended beyond physics proper.

One might well start out by taking in general men whose specialties are theoretical subjects, such as theoretical physics, genetics, higher theoretical chemistry, applied mathematics, mathematical statistics, etc. Gradually, as experimental facilities may be expanded, men whose main interest is in guiding experiments could also be invited.

I believe it would be useless to try to get any of these men on the basis of a five-year contract, and that they would have to be employed for life. This could be a new kind of employment for which only men who are above sixty and who have a distinguished career behind them would be eligible, irrespective of whether they are Indians or Foreigners.

Clearly American or European scientists who retire from a university at sixty-five can find other employment, but if they were to leave their native country for five ^{years} and then return at the age of seventy, they could not count on finding employment at that advanced age. For this reason, it would not be suitable to offer them a five-year contract.

There were in recent years two distinguished men who, having reached retirement age, left the University of Chicago to go elsewhere. One of them was Thurstone, the psychologist, and the other was Sewall Wright, the geneticist. Both obtained positions at other universities in the United States, but they did so on the basis of last minute arrangements. Had they been approached by India three years before they were due for retirement

with a proposition along the lines here described, I think there would have been a good chance for India to secure their services. I have no doubt that the number of such examples could be multiplied by looking at what happened in this respect at other universities.

Leo Sallard

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cc: Dr. B. D. Larola
University Grants Commission
New Delhi, India