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October 29, 1952

Mr. Leonard E. Read, President
Foundation for Economic Education, Inc.
Irvington-on-Hudson, New York

Dear Leonard:

A few days ago Jim Rogers and I had lunch with the two school superintendents who were with us at the "retreat". They were E. S. Metcalf, Rock Island County Superintendent of Schools, and Alex Jardine, Moline Superintendent of Schools. Of course, as you probably guessed, they were originally asked because they strike us as being closer to subscribing to liberal ideas than the majority of our business men. Both of them, for example, have actively opposed federal aid to education.

The reason for the informal luncheon was to discuss the "retreat" with them since both of them had expressed some concern about a few comments they had heard and some portions of the discussion. Jim and I had the feeling that they needed some more background, particularly in the area of public education.

We told them that we felt that one of the most important aspects of the freedom philosophy is that we do not advocate that any institution which the people want should be abolished. All that libertarians try to do is to explain collectivism and show how these ideas that we have accepted and embraced over a long period of time conflict with the principles of individual liberty. We believe that once this conflict is well understood that the previously accepted institutions will simply disappear. They were uneasy about accepting the philosophy because they felt that if some drastic ideas were advanced, such as abolition of the public school system, that their previous endorsement of the Foundation or Spiritual Mobilization would place them in a very difficult position. Mr. Metcalf expressed the feeling that he believes that great progress was being made among teachers and other thought leaders, but that an idea such as eliminating the public schools would undo all the good work that had been done and would alienate the teachers who were going in the right direction.

Mr. Leonard E. Read (Cont.)

Page 2

Evidently in our enthusiasm in our discussion at the "retreat" a disparaging remark or two about public education was inadvertently dropped and they both picked it up as a rather personal criticism. What they asked us to do was to have you prepare a statement of your attitude toward public education so that they would have a way of evaluating the Foundation from their own personal viewpoint. What Jim and I would like to suggest is that you write each of them a letter explaining the ideas that you have given to us to illustrate that you do not advocate changes and, I believe I had this right, that it is your philosophy and the philosophy of the Staff of the Foundation that things generally are as they should be because this is the way the people want them; and until the educational process changes our concept so that we expect something different, this is the way things should be.

I do not know if such a letter is practical; but I do know that these men are very much on the side of freedom and as Jim says, "Give them a year or so and they will have thought this thing through and will be right with us."

If you decide that you can clarify your position for them, I will be interested in seeing what you have written them.

Cordially yours,

Chet

C. W. Anderson
Executive Vice President

CWA:aqr

P.S. Bert Metcalf is making the enclosed talk to all kinds of groups so you can see where he stands. What do you think of it?

UNITY BOND



RAG CONTENT