

Norman Thomas

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NEW YORK 10, N. Y.

March 9, 1954

Dr. Albert Einstein
Institute for Advanced Study
Princeton, N.J.

My dear Doctor Einstein:

It is with deep regret that I am declining an invitation to a conference and luncheon in your honor at the Nassau Tavern in Princeton, N.J., on Saturday, March 13th.

I share the respect and admiration for you that is felt by millions of people through the world. We cannot pay too great honor to the man who has given us a new conception of the physical universe; the man who, more than any other, gave us mastery over the awful power of the atom. With it all, you have stood with prophetic earnestness for the dignity and freedom of man, above all for his right to know.

Nevertheless, I must decline to express my appreciation by coming to your birthday celebration. The reason is that prominent and dominant personalities in the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee which has arranged this celebration have shown through the years anything but a consistent love of liberty, in or out of the academic field. I say this with regret but with knowledge born of long years of work in the field of civil liberties. I am thoroughly persuaded, as I think you are, that the test of freedom in America, and indeed among thoughtful men everywhere, is a capacity to oppose both communism and the thing that in America we call McCarthyism. These two movements interact to help each other. Unfortunately, persons now leading the Emergency Committee have steadily condoned, if they did not actually defend, communist crimes against liberty, which crimes are inherent in the doctrine and practice of a conspiratorial movement seeking universal power over the bodies, minds, and souls of men. These men and women work under a double standard which I am sure you do not accept.

This Committee has circulated your replies to five questions submitted to you on the meaning of academic freedom. Your replies restate forcefully and carefully your well known position. It is a position which I heartily accept with one qualification: I cannot agree with you that it is an infringement on liberty for proper authorities in the state, in the university, or the schools, to raise a question concerning the allegiance of men who seek posts in which it is of the utmost importance that their allegiance should be solely to their consciences in search of truth. It is allegiance to communism as a dictatorial conspiracy, not as a heresy which warrants proper inquiries under proper circumstances. The right to stay out of jail is not the right to hold every sort of position. It isn't the right to guide the young who, if they are to build more glorious democracy, cannot



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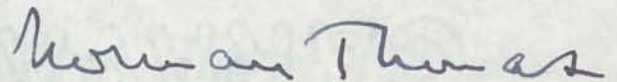
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have their faith in freedom impaired or their allegiance won by any organization, communist or fascist, which denies personal freedom. This truth is not negated by the blameworthy tactics of Congressional committees.

Your answer to questions on academic freedom in the document which has reached my desk ends with an appeal from you or the Committee - it is not clear which - for funds: "the collection and use of which should be put in the hands of a small organization under the supervision of persons known to be trustworthy." I should not for a moment challenge the integrity of the Emergency Committee in using funds for the defense of persons fully entitled to their day in court. But I am compelled to express regret that the Committee has appropriated your great name for a concept of freedom far different than yours. There are rights to which communists, fascists, and their fellow travelers and apologists are clearly entitled, but civil liberties cannot effectively be defended by Americans who through the years have condoned its absolute denial in the Soviet Union, while rushing hurriedly to the aid of men into whose primary political allegiance some sort of inquiry may be warranted.

Sincerely yours,



Norman Thomas

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