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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

February 3, 1953

The President
The White House



Dear Mr. President:

I understand that the matter of the confirmation of James B. Conant as High Commissioner in Germany will come before the Senate within the next few days. I feel as a courtesy to you, that I should inform you of the position which I shall take when this matter comes to the Senate floor.

I am strongly opposed to Mr. Conant's confirmation on the following four principal grounds:

1. His speech made in New York City on October 7, 1944, which, in my opinion, can be interpreted only as advocating the destruction of all industry in Western Germany, as shortly thereafter advocated in the Morgenthau Plan, which, as you know, was to a great extent prepared by Harry Dexter White. I feel that the Morgenthau Plan was completely unrealistic and played directly into the hands of our enemy. In fact, I believe Mr. Cordell Hull referred to it as a plan of "blind vengeance" and that you referred to the plan as "silly and tragic". You understand, of course, that I am not taking the position that Mr. Conant collaborated with Morgenthau or Harry Dexter White, but his plan covered in his speech was the same in its essential aspect, namely the destruction of industry in Western Germany.
2. His article in May of 1940 in the Atlantic Monthly, entitled "Education for Classless Society". Therein he states:

"If the American ideal is not to be an illusion the citizens of this republic must not shrink from drastic action. The requirement, however, is not a radical expropriation of wealth at any given moment, it is rather a continuous process by which power and privilege may be automatically re-distributed at the end of each generation."

It will be noted here that he opposes the Communist idea of a "radical expropriation of wealth at any given moment", but that he does favor a process by which the wealth will be automatically distributed at the end of each generation.



The President

This can mean only one thing, namely one hundred percent inheritance tax, which, of course, would ultimately result in the complete socialization of any country.

3. His opposition to parochial schools. He obviously has a right to oppose parochial schools and is undoubtedly honest in his opposition. However, as you know, most of the Germans are either Catholic or Lutheran and the parochial school subject is one upon which they feel very strongly. It would, therefore, seem that to appoint a man as High Commissioner of Germany who opposes the type of school system which is the heart of the educational system of Germany and about which those people feel so strongly will create a great deal of ill feeling toward America and furnish ammunition for the Communist propaganda guns.
4. His recent speech in which he first states that if there are Communists in colleges they should be rooted out by the Government, but then states that if an investigation were made and a few Communists found, the damage done would be greater than the harm in their remaining as educators. At the same time, you will recall, he stated there are no Communists at Harvard. It may be that Harlow Shapley, Kirtley Mather, and the late F. O. Matthiessen are not and were not Communists, but the surprise would lie in finding that out. They have been up early every morning doing the work of the Communist Party; they have espoused Communist causes on occasion after occasion. The reasonable presumption is that if they teach at Harvard they are intelligent men. If they are intelligent men and work sedulously in behalf of Communist causes, then the most reasonable inference is that they are doing so because they are either Communist or pro-Communist. They apparently are so recognized by everyone except Mr. Conant.

Let me make it clear that I do not accuse Mr. Conant of being either Communist or pro-Communist. However, I strongly feel that his innocent statements about Communist activities in education and about the presence of communism in his own faculty indicate a woeful lack of knowledge of the vicious and intricate Communist conspiracy. Certainly it doesn't show any qualifications for the task of safeguarding the American Embassy at Bonn against Communist penetration, nor with the task of meeting the Communist threat in Western Germany.

Let me make it clear that I feel that undoubtedly Mr. Conant is a fine gentleman. He also is apparently intelligent -- intelligent enough to have said on one occasion when addressing a Convocation of the University of New York in 1947, that he was greatly concerned by the fact that many temperamentally unsuited persons were making their way into universities.

The President

And he added: After all, "I can imagine a native scientist or philosopher, with strong loyalties to the advancement of civilization, and the unity of the world, who would be a questionable asset to a government department charged with negotiations with another nation. The same men, on the other hand, because of their professional competence, might make excellent professors."

Feeling as strongly as I do that Mr. Conant is not qualified for the job in Germany, normally I would put up an all-out fight on the Senate floor in an attempt to prevent his confirmation. I frankly would do that now if I thought there were any possibility of defeating him. However, I am convinced that many Senators who might normally question Conant's fitness will go along with the new President, who has received such an overwhelming vote of confidence from the American people.

This presents a very serious question of what would be gained or lost for this country and the peace of the world by greatly publicizing what I consider Mr. Conant's shortcomings for this job. I greatly fear that an all-out fight on my part against Conant, which I normally would feel compelled to make, would not accomplish his defeat and would furnish the Communists in Europe a vast amount of ammunition for their guns. For that reason, I have very reluctantly decided that while I shall vote against Mr. Conant, I shall not make any public statements in regard to him at this time, nor is this letter being made public by me. I might add that this is one of the most difficult decisions I have ever made. I feel that whichever course I take damage is being done. I am choosing what I consider the lesser of the two evils.

Wishing you good luck and good health, I remain

Very sincerely yours,



JOE McCARTHY

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