

10-20-1967

Correspondence, John C. Stennis, October 20-November 30, 1967

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Berkeley, California
October 20, 1967

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Senator John Stennis
Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C.

WASHINGTON OFFICE

OCT 23 1967


Dear Mr. Stennis,

On the evening news I just saw you speaking on the current protests against military conscription. I regret to say that your comments seemed most inappropriate for one in a high position of public trust. It is your duty, in case you may not be aware of it, to insure the rights of American citizens. It is not your position to denounce and brand as "communists" people who are seeking to reform and change policies of government with which they do not agree. It is, moreover, your practices which could be designated as outside the realm of American Government. Our government is based on the principle that people have a voice in its policies. People, such as yourself, who try to stifle dissent are the ones who are being "Un American," not those practicing the Democracy and freedoms they wish to preserve.

Further, I would like to comment on another important incident which occurred today in, by coincidence, your own state of Mississippi, although the results of the

Well publicized Federal trial of those men accused of violating (by murder) the Civil Rights of three young men left much to be desired, I would like to remind you of an important idea made obvious by said trial. Bigotry and injustice have long been passing from the common place scene in America. It is deplorable that such conditions have lasted so long in your state. However, I think you can see the implications of the jury's verdict. Americans should not be required to "earn" the rights which are given to them by their Creator. I advise you, Mr. Stennis, to look to your own Mississippi before trying to convince patriotic citizens it is they who are Un-American. Your ideas and those of most of your electorate will need to be reviewed in light of the decision reached by those twelve admirable Mississippians.

Sincerely,



32 - Pentagon
much

November 30, 1967

[REDACTED]
Berkeley, California

FILE COPY

Dear [REDACTED]:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter in which you take issue with my statements opposing the march on the Pentagon. I am enclosing a copy of a speech I made on the Senate Floor prior to this march which explains my position more fully.

With regard to your comment about Mississippi, having lived there all my life I feel I can speak with full authority on the attitude of Mississippians toward citizenship. Contrary to your impression, the people of Mississippi are staunch in their support of the rights of all people. I point out that all convictions in Mississippi courts have been by Mississippi judges and Mississippi jurors.

I believe you are somewhat confused about what citizenship really is. More than anything else, it is a privilege and one who enjoys the privilege of citizenship in America is obligated under the rule of law and morality to support America and its government. There is, of course, a place for dissent. Dissent to the part of marching against an established agency of the government so as to require 10,000 troops with bayonets to repel the attack and prevent damage to the headquarters of our Armed Services is not within the bounds of dissent allowed by law nor in keeping with decent conduct.

I regret that you do not agree with my thinking, but with all deference I believe my position is more in harmony with American ideals than are the motives and actions of those individuals whom you support in their campaign to discredit the United States.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

John Stennis
United States Senator

Enclosure
JS:WES/cw