

1237 Hafner Place,  
University City, Missouri,  
U.S.A.

Professor Harold J. Laski,  
London School of Economics,  
London, England.

Dear Professor Laski:

From your article which appears in The Nation, dated 2 July, 1949, entitled "America, Good and Bad", subtitled No. II, "Parties, Unions, Press", I quote:

"And deep as is the antagonism of the union leaders as a whole both to Communists and to the policies of the Soviet Union, it is least highly questionable whether they would support a war against Russia unless, as at Pearl Harbor, there was a direct attack upon the United States and its defense forces."

Before I discuss my sincere criticism of your statement, may I present my credentials: I refer you to page 72, 1948 Director of American Political Science Association for my biography. I have carried a union card for some time. I have worked in unions where members were at least "fellow traveller" and one union president was more than a "traveller". I have followed your career since I first came under your influence at the Graduate School at the University of Wisconsin under Professor William Benstein. I refer to my self as a Laski student once removed and have always defended you in various arguments. It was a pleasure to be in your audience on your last trip to St. Louis.

Now for your statement:

First, it is incorrect. You should have substituted the phrase "war with Russia" for this phrase "any imperialistic war for the defense of capitalism". Even then you would have been highly open for criticism. However, the phrase you did chose made the statement so incorrect that I must answer you.

At one time a very few (they were an infinitesimal minority) of union leaders may have taken the attitude

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which you express. Our union leaders that now have that attitude may be counted literally on ones fingers. We are getting rid of those remaining few very fast.

The rank and file of union members and I am one, have never had that attitude. You realize perfectly well why it was possible for a few certain type union leaders to have a different attitude from those that are supposedly the followers.

I protest your inference that union members even might have that attitude at the present time. I fear that on your last trip to this country you did not get in touch with persons who carried union cards. You must have listened to certain people and a hostile press. Mr. Laski, believe me, it is not true. Union members fully realize the harm they have caused themselves by having placed themselves in a position whereby there have been cause to make statements as yours. We are correcting that problem right now and if you will only get in touch with the rank and file you will realize that the situation has been corrected.

You present series of articles in The Nation are very good. I approve of them most heartily. However, I feel that I would be doing you and the many friends of The Nation if I did not bring before you my sincere views on your statement.

Sincerely yours,

BELMONT FORSYTHE.

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DEVON P----,  
ADDISON BRIDGE PLACE  
W. 14.  
FULHAM 2444

17 - 8 - 49

Dear Mr. Forsythe,

My secretary has sent on to me your very interesting letter which I much appreciated. You had real good fortune in coming under the influence of Bill Ebenstein. Apart from his remarkable width of cultivation, he has an integrity of mind which has always won from me immense respect. And I think he has the gift of communicating his high seriousness of purpose to others.

I was, of course, deeply interested in your remarks upon that article of mine, and, with your connections, you are more likely to be right than I am. But I think it is worth remembering that, despite all that was at stake from the British declaration of war on September 3, 1939, it took nothing less than the Japanese aggression at Pearl Harbour to enable President Roosevelt to take a united American people into that struggle. My own visits to Russia since 1945 have convinced me that, with all their obstinacy and stubborn arrogance and bully, the members of the Politbureau would not venture to risk a full-scale war for the next ten years. Without direct aggression on their part, I doubt whether the American people would endorse a preventive war in a spirit of united determination. The cost

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to you would not only be the need to send millions of men to Europe during the struggle, but to police it afterwards; and when you had announced your victory, I think you would find that the White House had become a minor annexe of the N. A. M.\* with the need to destroy all trade union rights. Once the labour leaders think, not of the little fish abroad, but the big fish overseas, I think they would prefer peace with minor obstructions to war with their own reduction to comatose symbols of a dead freedom. But, of course, I may be making a completely mistaken diagnosis of their power to analyse their situation.

With good wishes,

I am,

Yours sincerely,

Harold J. Laski

\* National Association of Manufacturers

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DEVON L.  
ADDISON BRIDGE PLACE,  
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FULHAM 2444.

17-8-49.

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with the need to destroy all trade union rights.  
Once the Indian leaders found, not of our work  
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they would prefer peace with minor abstractions  
to war with this poor reduction to concrete  
symbols of a dead freedom. But, of course, I  
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of their power to analyze their situation.

With good wishes,

I am,

Yours sincerely,

Harvey. Mark

KY BLDG.  
SC 829

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PRINCETON UNIVERSITY  
PRINCETON NEW JERSEY

Department of Politics

30 College Road  
Princeton, N.J.  
September 12, 1949.

Dear Capt. Forsythe:

Thank you for your letter of September 2 and the Laski correspondence which I am enclosing. I should have written to you earlier, but we had a baby (boy) on September 2, and I am a little behind in my correspondence.

It is rather unfortunate that Laski was prevented from speaking in several places during his recent visit to this country. In 1946, he wrote for the Labour Party an official pamphlet, "THE SECRET BATTALIONS" which is one of the most incisive indictments of Communism and Communists I know of. You may obtain it in this country from the Rand School Book Store, 7 East 15th Street, New York 3, N.Y., for about 15 or 25 cents. If you are unable to get a copy, I shall be glad to mail you one. It was particularly painful to him to be portrayed as a Communist or fellow-traveller; part of his pain was also due to the fact that he is very fond of the United States and of Americans. His latest experience here made him feel rather bitter, and probably, as you rightly suggest, too bitter and pessimistic. Of course, I felt fifteen years ago, when I attended his seminar in London, that he was a little too pessimistic about the prospects of democracy in Britain and the United States, and told him so at the time. However, some of my friends think that I am congenitally and morbidly optimistic, so who knows whether

JOHN F. FORSYTHE  
PRINCETON

he is right or not. I often feel that his somewhat undue pessimism with regard to the strength of anti-democratic forces in his own country and the USA is the result of his passionate concern for the cause of freedom. Also, most of Laski's experience in this country was around 1920, when he spent five or six years here; I have the feeling that he not quite completely grasped the change of public sentiment in the US since the early and middle thirties.

Your job with the Marines sounds most interesting, and I hope you will continue enjoying it.

Thanks for your encouraging remarks about "Man and the State." You undoubtedly noticed a good deal of what we did in the seminar in 1946 at Wisconsin went into the book. Of all the seminars I gave, that seminar stands out in my memory as one of the most impressive experiences on account of the maturity and unusual backgrounds of the participants. Teaching is becoming again "normal," and I begin to miss the veterans. They made teaching different for a few years.

With best wishes to you, and hoping that everything goes well with you and your family, I am

Yours sincerely,

*William Ebenstein*

William Ebenstein

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