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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

May 20, 1969

Dear Curtis:

I wish I could find the right words with which to reply to your letter. My problem, I suppose, is that I don't know how to be responsive, even though I agree with so much of what you have to say.

The deep disillusionment of young people in their country has its roots in the Vietnam war. When the power of the state is used to force young men to fight a war they believe to be wrongful, under penalty of imprisonment if they refuse, the seeds of sedition are sown. We now reap the bitter harvest, manifested in angry uprisings on campuses from coast to coast. The student revolt at any given time or place seizes upon some issue of convenience. But everywhere the protest is aimed at the only center of authority the students can reach, the college administrators.

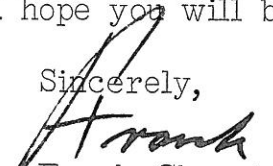
Whenever the limb is shaken, all the leaves tremble. Once the moral authority of the government is rejected, on an issue so fundamental as a wrongful war, every lesser institution of authority is placed in jeopardy. Every sacred principle, every traditional value, every settled policy becomes a target for ridicule or repudiation. Cauldrons of anarchy soon begin to bubble and boil.

So it has happened that our country is coming unstuck. The ferment distorts every issue; perspective is lost. What I am trying to say, Curt, is this: Don't judge your country, the integrity of its institutions, the character of its people, too harshly. The times are soured by a mistaken war from which there is no easy path of extrication.

I am convinced we must end the war -- or at least our participation in it -- before we can begin to stick this country back together again. Then we must have the help of men like you, men who haven't abandoned all faith, and who regard the job as worth doing.

When that day comes, I hope you will be on hand.

Sincerely,


Frank Church