

Levi Pennington

People

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Pennington to The Speaker of The House of Representatives, March 22, 1948

Levi T. Pennington

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March 22, 1948.

Hon. Joseph W. Martin, Jr.,
Speaker House of Representatives,
House Office Building,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Martin:--

The proposals before Congress for universal compulsory military training and peace time conscription are of deep concern to me, and to millions of others from whom you will never hear, the inarticulate heart of America. I trust that you will resist any effort to stampede you with the war hysteria which is being so vigorously promoted, largely, I think, by those who "have an axe to grind." It does not look good to see the military violating the law in seeking to influence legislation, with the only penalty a suggestion that they should desist.

Even from the military standpoint, mass armies and superficial training are not the answer. If we are to invade some other country, it will be with rocket ships, guided missiles, bacteriological attacks and/or atomic bombs. If either of the latter are used in attacks, we could not then invade without suicide. If we are attacked, it will be with some of these same weapons, with mass armies only the better targets. And at present we have the only atomic bombs in the world. (Russia could not know that she has without demonstration, and if she demonstrated our instruments would detect it, if it were on the other side of the earth.)

Let's give Russia more credit for intelligence than to suppose that she would attack us when she knows that we have the means that would blot the heart of that country off the earth -- and she knows that we have the heartlessness to use that weapon; the mass of the Russians do not know, perhaps, but the leaders do, and if they doubted, Japan could tell them.

But aside from the futility of mass training of a superficial character for a war which if it comes will be carried on by highly trained technicians, I object to universal military training and peace time conscription because adopting these measures would be enthroning in our own country the things that made Germany, Italy and Japan what they were, and led to their destruction. Let's have America a democracy still, not a military despotism.

Sincerely yours,

Levi T. Pennington.