

Eugene J. McCarthy

Washington, D. C.

Miss Jane Tolmach  
Oxnard, California

Dear Miss Tolmach:

As we near the opening of the Democratic National Convention, I want to share with you some thoughts about the issues before our country and our party in 1968.

We face difficult times. The war in Vietnam continues--now the longest, and one of the most misguided wars in our nation's history. Our reputation and influence abroad diminishes. The condition of our cities grows worse, not better. Our economy is unstable. The poor of our urban ghettos grow bitter. Violence and repression threaten to replace reason and conciliation as instruments for political change. And across the nation, many Americans, particularly the young, have begun to wonder if the American political system can indeed respond adequately to the unprecedented problems which now face the Republic.

We cannot ignore these matters as we prepare to meet in Chicago. We cannot ignore the anxiety of our people, nor their dissatisfaction with the course of the past four years. Nor can we ignore the fact that the nation is ready to pass judgment on our party, our leaders and our policies. These are the facts of 1968.

We must acknowledge that the Democratic party faces a crisis and a challenge this year, greater perhaps than any we have faced since 1932. It is that challenge which we must consider as we prepare for our National Convention.

America wants change; nothing can be more clear. And America will seek change in the elections of 1968. It can turn to the Republican party, as it did in 1952, when another war seemed beyond solution or settlement. Or it can turn to the Democrats.

I believe that Americans will seek change with the Democratic party--but only if they are first shown change in the Democratic party: in the priorities we set, in the programs we pursue, and in the leadership we offer. It will not be enough, then, merely to call for change. If we are to succeed in 1968, the Democratic party must stand for change, and, most important, it must stand convincingly for change. That, I believe, is the meaning of the enthusiasm and support which Senator Robert Kennedy and I received in primary after primary.

So I seek your support for my effort with confidence in our party as well as concern for our nation. You know where I stand on the issues facing our country. I am enclosing for your reference a copy of my pamphlet, First Things First. But as we prepare for our Convention, I wanted to make clear to you my own sense of urgency about the decisions we must make. I look forward to meeting with you in Chicago, where we must set a new course for success in November.

Sincerely yours,

Eugene J. McCarthy