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GETTYSBURG
PENNSYLVANIA

November 14, 1962

Dear Henry:

While at Columbia University, as you know, I became convinced that different groups within the United States were doing too much of their thinking separately. The academic group was a world apart; the governmental segment, at least at the professional level, was isolated from the flow of public opinion; and business and professional men were not closely in touch with either of the other groups.

It seemed to me that some institution should draw together these diverse elements for mutual discussion and enlightenment with a view to developing a consensus. The purpose was to give them all an opportunity to read competently prepared material relevant to the topic to be discussed and then meet in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere to talk things out. For this purpose I was glad to accept the gift of Arden House from Governor Harriman. It has proved to be an ideal location.

Like all institutions The American Assembly did not develop precisely as I had envisioned it. Experience, however, confirmed the validity of the basic idea and suggested its application to other parts of the country. Assemblies have now been held in cooperation with 52 universities and other educational organizations across the nation.

It was so successful in developing this process that in setting up the Commission on National Goals I committed its administration to The American Assembly and made the head of the Assembly Chairman of the Commission. The result has been a nationwide discussion of those goals on a scale far beyond expectations.

Other significant questions such as our representation abroad, the limitation of armaments, outer space--to mention only a few--have been the subjects of Assemblies. During the years since its founding Assemblies have been held on twenty-two different topics. To indicate how pervasive this idea has become, last year there were not only the two national Assemblies at Arden House but twenty-one regional Assemblies in this country and one in England.

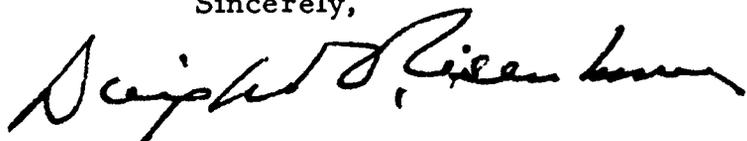
From the original idea have also grown Assemblies of college students, even of gifted high school students. These have proved effective in developing a lively interest in public affairs among young people.

Instead of trying to do this all as one operation, an extremely small staff on a modest budget has drawn upon a wide range of talents to prepare the materials for discussion and has cooperated with a large number of universities and colleges and other groups. In this way responsibility is shared among many people and institutions. The method has made the program more effective and also much more economical than would otherwise have been possible.

I know the Assembly is chartered as an educational institution by the Regents of the State of New York, granted tax exemption by the Commissioner of Internal Revenue. And you tell me that financial support on particular topics from the great philanthropic foundations has been generous, but for the support of its general operations--about \$150,000 annually--the Assembly is totally dependent on gifts from individuals and corporations.

Because I am so well satisfied with the fulfillment of the promise inherent in the idea, I wish to commend its support to all who believe that an informed and lively public opinion is, in the long run, the best guarantee of the integrity of our institutions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dwight D. Eisenhower". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name "Sincerely,".