

June 8, 1939

Dear Mr. Lewis:

I have been out of town for some weeks on a piece of rather absorbing work and as usual neglecting the F L S affairs.

I would be at your dinner on Thursday evening at the Town Hall but I must go away that very day - an old engagement. However, you ask that if I cannot be there I record my opinion about the changing of the name.

Frankly, I dislike very much to see the old name given up. My experience has been that a name once established has a good deal of value which is largely destroyed by a new name. That a new name means that you must begin pretty nearly at the bottom again to build up. Again, The New American Society is so general that it is at once classified with the multitude of societies that have been springing up in the last two years, particularly in the interpretation and defense of what we suppose America to mean. It means a great deal of work, I am convinced, to secure a following for this larger and ~~dangerous~~ title. The Foreign Language Information Service may seem to be narrow but it certainly means something definite to a large number of people - foreigners particularly. I see no reason ~~that~~ why under that title all that America means, the interpretation of America, particularly of the foreign born, should not go on in as large a way as we can devise.

The admirable material on democracy which the Service is sending out, not addressed particularly to aliens, addressed to all Americans, shows what we can do I think. What I am afraid of is that we have spread ourselves out too thin, like a multitude of other thin and vague organizations committed to the same grand purposes and not having the practical experience that the F L S has had. That is the criticism I have to make on a great many movements that are going on today with whose intentions I heartily sympathize but whose methods I feel have not got enough ~~grip~~ to them.

And say you

to

will

grip -

Now these are my objections which I have stated quite frankly, but I should in any case bow to the majority of opinion and I have respect for the judgment of those who are actively at work as I cannot be for the E L I S.

That article of yours and Miss Schibsby on the Status of the Refugee under American Immigration Laws is altogether the best thing I have seen. It is that kind of work which makes the Service so distinctive, so reliable, so respectable.

What do you know about the Humanity Guild? Their published plan for colonization seems to me the most practical plan I have seen.

Very sincerely yours

Mr. Read Lewis
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