

JOHN STEINBECK • Box 1017, Sag Harbor, Long Island, New York

28 MAY, 1966

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

I AM GRATEFUL TO YOU FOR RECEIVING MY SON AND ME. IT MEANT A GREAT DEAL TO BOTH OF US AND I AM SURE THAT SEEING YOU REASSURED HIM THAT RESPONSIBILITY IS BEHIND HIM AND BACKING HIM. HE HAD NEVER BEEN TO WASHINGTON BEFORE. FROM THE PLANE I TOOK HIM FIRST TO THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL. HE STOOD FOR A LONG TIME LOOKING UP AT THAT HUGE AND QUIET FIGURE AND THEN HE SAID, 'OH! LORD! WE HAD BETTER BE GREAT.'

YOU WILL UNDERSTAND THAT I AM PLEASED WITH THIS BOY AND PROUD. HE KNOWS WHAT HE WANTS AND MUST DO. HE IS THOROUGHLY TRAINED TO DO IT. HE IS PROUD OF HIS UNIFORM AND PROUD OF HIS COUNTRY. HE GOES VERY SOON NOW, AND AS YOU MUST KNOW, MY HEART GOES WITH HIM. AND I WILL ASK YOU, SIR, TO REMEMBER YOUR PROMISE TO PRAY FOR HIM.

I KNOW THAT YOU MUST BE DISTURBED BY THE DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST POLICY IN VIETNAM. BUT PLEASE REMEMBER THAT THERE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN PEOPLE WHO INSISTED ON THEIR RIGHT TO CHOOSE THE WAR IN WHICH THEY WOULD FIGHT TO DEFEND THEIR COUNTRY. THERE WERE MANY WHO WOULD HAVE NO PART OF MR. ADAMS' AND GEORGE WASHINGTON'S WAR. WE CALL THEM TORIES. THERE WERE MANY ALSO WHO CALLED GENERAL JACKSON A BUTCHER. SOME OF THESE SHOWED THEIR DISAPPROVAL BY SELLING BEEF TO THE BRITISH. THEN THERE WERE THE VERY MANY WHO DENOUNCED AND EVEN IMPEDED MR. LINCOLN'S WAR. WE CALL THEM COPPERHEADS. THEN THERE WERE THOSE WHO NOT ONLY DENOUNCED BUT DESTROYED PRESIDENT WILSON'S POLICY. BECAUSE OF VERY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, WE WILL NOT CALL THEM ANYTHING--- FOR A WHILE. I REMIND YOU OF THESE THINGS, MR. PRESIDENT, BECAUSE SOMETIMES, THE SHRILL SQUEAKING OF PEOPLE WHO SIMPLY DO NOT WISH TO BE DISTURBED, MUST BE SADDENING TO YOU. I ASSURE YOU THAT ONLY MEDIOCRITY ESCAPES CRITICISM.

AGAIN MY THANKS TO YOU, SIR. YOU GAVE MY BOY A PEDIMENT OF PRIDE, AND THAT A GOOD SOLDIER MUST HAVE.

AS ALWAYS, FAITHFULLY,

*John Steinbeck*