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Henri Temianka Correspondence; (wpaepcke)

Walter P. Paepcke

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38 South Dearborn Street, Chicago 3, Illinois

Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies

December 2, 1950

Mr. Henri Temianka
2961 Motor Avenue
Los Angeles 64, California

Dear Temi:

I duly received your letter of the 26th with enclosure called "A Preliminary Memorandum." In talking to Miss Denton on the long distance phone I also learned of her conversation with you during the last few days.

We all recognize the desirability of having men like Nehru, Einstein, Churchill, Schweitzer, etc. Practically, it is a very difficult and almost impossible thing to do. In the present state of the world, I would doubt that Nehru would make any plans to come to a relatively unknown place like Aspen and that then, no matter what happened in the world, he could be definitely counted upon to be there. Einstein has been ill and dislikes even traveling from Princeton to New York; he turned us down flatly due to health reasons two years ago. Churchill will want to be on the spot if new British elections should suddenly be called. Now if one announces in good faith the coming of such world figures, even if they have definitely accepted, and then something unforeseen happens, it would be a catastrophe. Even last year when we had a definite acceptance from Ortega, ill health overtook him and he could not come; we had only made a preliminary announcement of his acceptance and then of course left his name out of later announcements, but notwithstanding this several people said they would come only to see and hear Ortega and were furious that the plans had to be changed.

We were all shivering in our boots about Schweitzer, aged 75, possibly being told by his doctor at the last minute that he should not go to a high altitude; nine-tenths of the publicity given the Goethe Bicentennial Convocation was directed by the magazines and newspapers to Schweitzer; had he not arrived it would have been terrible. World figures like that cannot be substituted for. Also, I am inclined to think that these figures attract not necessarily an audience that wants to be educated, but rather curiosity seekers, autograph hunters, and the like. I believe we have to make the program and the ideas of the Aspen events the main attraction, rather than use the star system. Piatigorsky recently told me that if an advertisement were put into the New York papers that three outstanding and beautiful musical compositions were going to be done

by a guaranteed top ranking artist, probably nobody would come; if on the other hand a big box office draw is advertised, people will more or less jam the place irrespective of what he is going to perform. However, people are not going to make a trip all the way across the country to a relatively remote and inaccessible place for big names unless they are absolutely sure they can never see or hear them anywhere else. To get a Nehru to come to Aspen exclusively and not to make speeches in New York, Washington, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, when he has made the long trip and has hundreds of invitations, is almost an impossible thing to do.

I am not sure that audiences who normally have two or three weeks vacation would be apt to stay six weeks. Some scholars, many ladies, students, yes, but probably not the average working man. I am therefore inclined to think that a six or eight week music school with two or three concerts a week and perhaps two lectures and one seminar a week is the best solution; this contemplates a changing audience. Incidentally, I have had about 100 replies from letters sent out and the vast majority of these say that they would like to come back for a week or two if there is something planned for this summer, but that they feel the schedule was too full and that most of them, who have only two or three weeks vacation, want to have plenty of time to relax, climb mountains, play tennis, swim, fish, etc. and that our last year's program sounded too forbidding and austere. Very few suggest that we should in any way popularize or lower the level, but they did think we should emphasize the vacation and recreational aspects and then give people enough time to enjoy them. Almost all of them are against morning lectures; most of them suggest late afternoon and evening activities of a cultural nature, leaving the days free.

As far as the Music School is concerned, it is of course of the essence to have a sufficient number of students. Most of the teaching artists feel that a maximum of twenty hours of teaching per week should be aimed at. There would be enough artists in residence so that with two or at the most three concerts a week the concertizing and rehearsing could be definitely limited.

Of course the budget is beginning to take on frightening proportions. Most everyone mentions what, even at a sacrifice, they would have to earn in order to be able to afford to come even if they only expected to break even. At times the unhappy thought forces itself upon my mind that I, too, am usually paid for my efforts, and rather well, while out in Aspen I have to be satisfied to be the idealist, if I may use the word, be paid nothing for the time and energy consumed and end up, last summer at least, with a \$53,000 deficit after having figuratively broken my back to raise \$48,000 contributions; if this had not been done the deficit would have been \$101,000. The Aspen Company, meanwhile, will manage to wind up the year 1950 in spite of World Ski Championships in February and eleven weeks of summer festival with an additional loss of \$25,000. Many of my educational friends are always wondering why business men don't sometimes try to do something of a cultural nature while they are alive, rather than let some of the trustees of a foundation mess around with what they think the founder might have done with these same funds had he been alive. At the current rate of losses, I am not in the least danger of leaving any foundation, but perhaps the punishing losses which apparently have to be taken and which some of us just cannot afford constitute the main reasons why more cultural activities and pursuits are not sponsored.

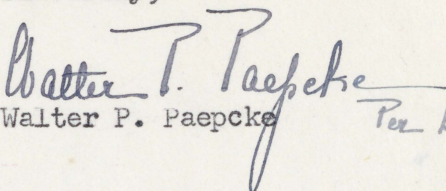
This is a very rambling letter, but perhaps you can get a little additional insight into some of the problems which confront the Institute, its program, and, in fact, threaten its existence.

I am leaving for New York this afternoon and will be back in a week. Between the 10th of December and the 21st, much should be decided so that publicity, announcements, indications of programs, etc. can be released. Otherwise time will begin running out. I will be in touch with you.

Meanwhile, I am more than delighted to see your continued interest, as well as that of many others. The ideal we are all striving for I think is definitely worth while in these horribly depressing times in which we are living. To accomplish anything worth while in this direction takes time, energy, thought, and sacrifice on the part of a great many who share the idea.

With very best regards, I am

Sincerely,


Walter P. Paepcke *Per L.K.*

Dictated by Mr. Paepcke who was obliged to leave for New York before the letter was ready for signature.