

Letter from Arthur to Mary Prior, 8 July, 1954¹

23 Vernon Terrace

Hillsborough

Thurs. 8/7/54

Darling,

It's 8.30, and I've just more or less finished the dishes, so there isn't much time to write. While I was doing the dishes I was thinking about what I was going to say next Wednesday about Freedom and so forth, and I think I can rough out a pretty good speech. Must try and get it written reasonably early so I can get it typed and give copies to reporters. Roughly something like this: I've been asked to speak on 'the philosophical basis of freedom', but don't like the title much. There are some things we do and value ∴ of other things; but others which we just do and value for their own sake, and that's that. {2} In any case there's no need to build up an elaborate philosophical argument in order to talk New Zealanders into believing in freedom. It's part of our heritage, tradition &c. But a philosopher can properly urge people to be consistent about their basic belief – we're being told right and left about our duty to 'defend the free world', and I don't want to dispute that – am a returned man myself and all that. But if we have a duty to defend the free world, then we have a prior duty to be the free world.

- Then a crack at sundry politicians (needn't name them).

- And an answer – by – anticipation to the charge that I'm being idealistic. Can't in one breath ask blokes to be idealistic enough to risk their life for freedom, and then in other breath say we shouldn't be too idealistic about it. [And Westerners who want to filch freedom in the name of freedom are like commies² filching peace from us in name of peace.]³ – These anti-freedom blokes are in fact being subversive, in a more subtle and sinister sense than the handful of uninfluential commies and pacifists that the term is usually applied to. – And after {3} this theory, a bit of the practical NZ is a pretty free country for most of us; I certainly have nothing to complain of but I'm worried about the way the shoe's beginning to pinch the school-teaching profession. Small-scale and large-scale intolerance; probable bad effect on quality of teaching &c. And finish with that.

Must apologize for treating you like a public meeting. But aforesaid the thing was going around in my head while I was dish-washing, and inevitably kept encircling when I turned to this immediately thereafter; esp. when pressure of time made it impos. for me to sit down and let such things subside (work'em of on a bit of note paper for use next Wednesday).

Heaps and heaps of love

¹ Editors' note: This letter has been edited by Martin Prior, Peter Øhrstrøm and David Jakobsen. It is part of the Martin Prior Collection, presently kept at Aalborg University folder B, item 5. The letter is written on standard unheaded writing paper. The letter was written while Mary was hospitalised with tuberculosis.

² Editors' note: A "commie" is New Zealand slang for a "Communist."

³ Editors' note: Written in the margin.

- Skig

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