My dear Senator Lehman:

I am informed that the Senate will be asked to vote on a proposal that all sections relating to Universal Military Training be eliminated from the Universal Military Training and Service bill, now under discussion.

In my opinion this is not just another amendment, to be given hasty consideration. Scrapping the Universal Military Training provisions would cut the heart out of the bill. The distinctive contribution the bill makes to our national security would be removed. This single action would be sufficient to cancel the assurance that our defenses would have, for the first time, an enduring base that would guarantee us adequate military strength at a cost we could bear for the years of critical world tension that we now face.

I have been fearful that the long debate over many details of this legislation would dim the fundamental conception which is the basis of the bill. I believe it is important to restate that purpose now so that every Senator may realize exactly what will be the result of voting to remove the Universal Military Training features from this measure.

This bill is intended to enable us to maintain the strength we need to curb aggression and safeguard peace. We must expand our forces in being with all possible speed. At the same time we must assure a dependable flow of trained young manpower into our civilian reserve components so that we can transfer a larger part of the future responsibility for our security to these citizen groups and thus cut down the size of our professional military establishment, of the troops on active duty.

No man is wise enough to know how long the present emergency will last. One thing we do know. Unless we give unequivocal proof now of our determination to organize our defenses on a sound, long-range basis, our potential enemies will be encouraged to believe that we will, sooner or later, relax our vigilance and provide them with an opportunity to achieve their goal of world domination.
Our past history is a fever chart of panicky mobilization in periods of crisis, followed by too hasty disarmament when the sense of urgency subsided. So long as our enemies have any ground for believing that we will again weary of the cost of preparedness or that we will wreck our economy by attempting to support a standing military organization of large proportions, we can have little hope that they will abandon their aggressive policies and seek an honest peace at the conference table. By the same token, our allies will find it hard to place any confidence in the durability of our support and their will to stand fast against totalitarian pressure will be correspondingly reduced.

Universal Military Training is not a step toward militarizing our country. Its effect in my opinion is precisely the opposite. By building up the civilian reserve and cutting down the regular military establishment or troops on active duty it offers maximum assurance that we can reduce the number of men who must leave their families, their jobs and curtail their education to serve in the Army, Navy and Air Force. It would require fewer men under arms, while giving us a vastly greater number of trained men quickly available for duty in a sudden emergency.

It would distribute the obligation for national defense equitably and democratically among all our young men at the time when fulfillment of this obligation would involve minimum hardship for them, for their communities and for our productive economy. It would permit the maintenance of a strong educational system and prevent any interference with the scientific and technical leadership that is so vital to our total security. It is the common-sense answer to our defense problems in a world situation that may remain tense for a long period of years.

Because this legislation is designed to meet needs that are so unpredictable, the establishment of a fixed expiration date would wipe out much of its value. Any date that was set would represent a marker for those who conspire against us to anchor their hopes that we would revert once again to our old state of vulnerable unpreparedness. Instead of peace, their strategy would be directed toward creating a synthetic atmosphere of calm so that we would strip ourselves of available trained reserves without putting anything in their place.
I am not suggesting that the Congress should adopt this program on a permanent basis and then abandon all concern with its effectiveness or administration. On the contrary, I believe it should be the obligation of the Department of Defense and also of the independent control commission, to be appointed by the President with the advice and approval of the Senate, to render regular reports to the Congress on all aspects of the program.

It is my conviction that any program of such fundamental importance to the American people should have a full review by the Congress at regular intervals to make certain that it is accomplishing the purpose for which it was set up and that it is being administered in a democratic, economical and effective manner. Such a review should go beyond the comprehensive appraisal that every Governmental program receives each year in the course of its Congressional budget hearings.

My experience in a lifetime of association with the military departments has convinced me that Universal Military Training is an essential element in any genuine program of national security for this country. It is not a new idea. It has been advocated by many thoughtful, peace-loving Americans in all of the years since George Washington first proposed a program of this type 150 years ago.

There are always people who feel that this is not the right time to consider Universal Military Training. In periods of emergency, it is argued that we must concentrate all our attention on building up our immediate strength, not waste energy on long-term plans. In periods of apparent peace, it is argued that we must scale down our strength almost to the last degree.

We have a great national decision to make, a really historic decision. We need Universal Military Training as a fundamental and inseparable part of the bill you are now considering. We cannot draw a line between the problems we must face today and those we may have to face tomorrow. I hope the Senate will not follow the line of evasion or delay. I hope you will vote to approve the basic provisions of this legislation, as reported out by the Senate Armed Service Committee.

Faithfully yours,