
**Letter to Henry J. Ryan, National Director,
Americanism Commission, the American Legion
in Indianapolis, IN,
from J. Edgar Hoover, Special Assistant
to the Attorney General in Washington, DC,
January 31, 1921.**

Carbon in DoJ/BoI Investigative Files, NARA collection M-1085, reel 943, file 205894-94.

JEH-EMR

January 31, 1921.

Henry J. Ryan, National Director,
Americanism Commission, the American Legion,
Meridian Life Building,
Indianapolis, Ind.

My dear Mr. Ryan:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of the 11th instant inquiring as to what action the American Legion can take to remedy the handicap under which the Department of Justice has been working in dealing with the activities of radical elements in this country.

I am enclosing herewith, for your information, a draft of a bill which the Attorney General [Mitchell Palmer] submitted to Congress in November 1919. At that time several bills were introduced by various congressmen and senators

who were interested in obtaining legislation which would enable the Federal government to adequately protect itself and the American institutions against the seditious acts and radical elements in our national life. I would suggest that you obtain copies of the various bills which have been introduced in Congress, such as the Sterling Bill, which I am informed did pass the Senate but which has not as yet passed the House of Representatives. The enclosed draft is merely a proposal in order that there might be something concrete to work upon. Of course, legislation dealing with sedition and criminal anarchy must be carefully drafted so that it may not infringe upon the rights of free speech and freedom of the press. However, it should always be born in mind that while freedom of speech is a liberty it is not a license and that it must be exercised within reasonable bounds.

Very truly yours,

J.E. Hoover,

Special Assistant to the Attorney General.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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