

April 6, 1971

Dear Carl:

As I am facing a serious problem I hope you will have time to read this entire letter so that you can give me a carefully thought-out statement about the matter.

I would like to be able strongly to endorse the march in Washington on May 8. My wife and I marched the entire distance in each of the two previous marches. I did everything I could to promote them among the students. I asked faculty members to speak about them in chapel, gave them strong recommendations in my classes, and put notices to this effect on the bulletin board. I would like to do the same thing for the coming march but must be sure that it will be of a nature that I can conscientiously support.

There are two vital principles that must be upheld. I could not conscientiously do anything that would controvert either of these two principles.

The first of these is the importance of impartial justice. It was the desire of our country's founders to establish a government "not of men but of laws." Courts were set up to examine cases in full detail. The guilt or innocence of men accused of crime should be determined through careful and thorough examination of the evidence by men trained and qualified to judge as to the sincerity and credibility of witnesses. Certain army officers also have received special training for this purpose. Decision as to matters of this type should not be made through broadcasts or marches or confrontations, but through careful examination of facts by men trained to evaluate evidence. When a panel of trained army experts, after spending long periods of time examining witnesses and fully investigating the facts of a case, has decided that a certain man is guilty of premeditated murder, it would be an attack upon our whole system of justice to ask that the President issue him a pardon. If there is reason to think that the judges have been prejudiced or that there has been an error somewhere in the proceedings, the President might be asked to order a new trial. But to ask him to pardon a man guilty of murder is an affront against our whole idea of justice and freedom.

Our streets are filled with violence. It is unsafe to walk in the centers of our big cities at night. One of the principal causes of this is the fact that criminals are not punished, as was formerly the case. The Bible teaches capital punishment, not liberation and eulogizing of those who commit murder.