

April 15, 1977

Mr. Irving F. Laucks, President
The Laucks Foundation
P.O.Box 5012
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Dear Irving:

Since our discussion on Monday morning, I have had a number of further talks with administrators on campus about the possibility of establishing an endowed professorial chair. I have not been involved in this sort of venture before and have not known what procedures need to be followed.

First, everyone with whom I spoke welcomed the idea of an endowed chair and expressed gratitude for your keen interest in the University. The Laucks Lectures have been a great thing for the campus, and for religious studies at UCSB. You are well known among persons having anything to do with that, and your ideas and aspirations are very much respected.

Second, very specific regulations have been established for the endowment of a professorial chair. First, it seems that \$500,000 is the minimal amount for a permanent endowment. The Regents of the University request \$800,000 for the same. (I note -- see enclosure -- that Yale University requests \$1,000,000 for an endowed chair.) The money used for salary and other expenses is drawn from interest on the fund. Since faculty appointments ordinarily occur at the full-professor level, the endowment must be large enough to cover a significant annual expense.

I also learned that the University will not accept a gift for an endowed chair on a matching-fund basis. Neither is it in a position to supplement a partially-funded chair from its own resources.

Also, the subject-area in which the chair is established must conform to the standards of regularly-established fields and disciplines within the University. This does not mean that one cannot establish something new, but it does mean that whatever is established fall within a recognized field or discipline and be a subject which can be approached in an objective scientific manner. To take an example: it would be difficult to establish a "chair for peace" in just such terms, but it would be possible to establish a "chair in contemporary values" to draw attention to a large range of interrelated issues. Prominent among these issues could be an exploration of human alternatives in a world free from war.

I don't think any of these specifications of regulations need discourage you. They are necessary and sensible guidelines within which

everyone must work.

At the same time, let's not let specifications, regulations, and requirements diminish the importance of what you have wanted to establish. A permanently-endowed chair in the University of California is no small creation. It will have influence for generations and generations to come. Further, it can be devoted toward exploring and giving formation to human alternatives in a world freed from war, and can do this by drawing upon the richest resources within the humanities, social sciences, and the world's religious traditions (which are also undergoing transformation at the present time).

Let me also reiterate that if the \$500,000 minimal figure is too imposing -- beyond what you wanted to commit to this venture -- would you consider certain possibilities within the Institute of Religious Studies? We could initiate a large series of projects and ventures on the very topics you want addressed, and the projects could include conferences and publications involving the contributions of the best minds and persons available. We could also offer academic courses from time to time; that is, courses as opposed to appointing one particular individual to a professorial chair. By this means, we could also bring in visiting speakers. My goals in this respect would be to provide year-round coverage -- in a variety of forms -- of various aspects of the subject. I think the general subject is "transformation of contemporary values," and the obvious principal catalyst is the threat of nuclear destruction. But there are a wide range of ramifications, all the way from the restyling of education to learning new habits to integrating new-found religious resources to reconceiving the ongoing course of human history.

If you give me the opportunity, I will devote as much time and energy and resourcefulness to this range of issues as the funds will allow. I'd like to be able to utilize, say, \$25,000 to \$50,000 per year (for the next several years) for this purpose, with the hope that this amount might attract additional monies. With this we could initiate a number of important projects: a regular publication, periodic conferences and symposia (the proceedings of which would be published in the publication), occasional courses for undergraduates at UCSB, as well as testimony to the world that this is what we are involved in doing here.

And I guess I can't emphasize enough what a unique opportunity I believe this to be. Ours is the only research institute in a major public university in the country devoted to religious studies; we are totally unique in this respect. Our most recent publication has been issued by Harper & Row, Publishers, and we have two books published through University of California Press. In addition, because of unique formal ties with the Council on the Study of Religion in North America, we utilize publication resources which reach more than 15,000 scholars in religion in North America. We are affiliated with the American Council of Learned Societies together with the International Association for the History of Religion. If you 'hook up' with the Institute -- I am speaking as a friend -- I know you will be supporting an agency of the highest reputation and promise. And I really believe we can be of significant assistance in furthering the aspirations for which both of us stand.

Sincerely,

Walter H. Capps

FILE

May 14, 1977

Mr. Irving F. Laucks
The Laucks Foundation
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Santa Barbara, California 93103

Dear friend Irving:

I've been reflecting upon our recent conversations about ways in which we might combine our resources to further the peace initiatives we both share.

The task for me is to conceive of means by which those goals can be furthered and extended in terms appropriate to the campus and the University. As you know, what we can do through the Institute is to engage in research projects, sponsor conferences, arrange for publications and lectures, and disseminate the information therefrom to a very large audience and readership. But such projects must deal with subjects that will engage the academic community in academic terms.

I cite this fact from the outset, sensing that you may want to feel somewhat impatient with the means I am proposing. I simply want to reassure you -- as I have almost countless times -- that I agree with your goals and aspirations. The means I am proposing are designed to provide sure, steady, consistent, and cumulative advances. They pertain to the changing of ideas. They recognize that the currents run very deep in this field, and that changed opinion regarding peace requires a thorough revamping of a large network of human assumptions.

The first specific project I propose is an analysis of the attitudes of the major world religious traditions toward war. I think we know that while the religions have talked about peace and brotherhood, they have frequently contributed directly to the warfare mentality. The examples from Christian history are painful to recall. Indeed, as I type these lines I am aware that "religious warfare" is occurring in Ireland and in the Middle East. We can all recall the recent bloodshed in Bangladesh, again spawned by religious differences. It is both a historical and a contemporary issue. And if attitudes to warfare are to be changed, the religions themselves must undergo the necessary transformation. I don't want to preach this truth solely, but inquire, first, into fundamental attitudes toward war and peace on the part of the religious traditions. My colleagues and I are confident that no one has approached this subject in comparative terms. There has been, as yet, no comparative analysis of the attitude of the religions toward war.

What I want to do is to ask the most knowledgeable persons available to give us the wisdom of their study of the religious traditions on this issue. We will ask someone to examine the Buddhist tradition with this question uppermost in mind. The same will be done for the Hindu tradition, and for Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Taoism, Shinto, etc. We will rely on specialists entirely for this, and I believe we can attract the most expert persons in the land. Why? Because the issue is of fundamental significance and urgency!

We will commission such persons to engage in the necessary research, and then to provide an extensive paper or report. We will gather the same persons for a conference. We will publish the papers together in a book to make the information available to the public. And we will utilize the same resource persons to help us draw up a list of declarations -- or statements of faith -- which can then be utilized to influence the politicians, statesmen, and persons in authority.

The second specific project I propose is a colloquy on "the influence of the Vietnam War upon contemporary religious sensibility". My suspicion is that the Vietnam War has profoundly altered our ways of thinking and making sense of things. I believe that much of the agony of the Vietnam War experience was that we couldn't get used to the idea that there was no winning, indeed, that the only winning was ~~dis~~disengaging, withdrawing, and pulling out. According to previous criteria, to disengage and withdraw is to lose. But not this time. The same principle is being nurtured in our attitudes toward natural resources, the environment, and ecology. Instead of being free to go full steam ahead, we have had to find ways to cut back, draw in, and conserve.

I believe that in ways of which we are only dimly aware, this change in orientation has profoundly affected our entire way of life. I fully believe, Irving, that this fact, more than any other, is most responsible for the attraction many young people feel toward Asian religions. For the religions of Asian culture are not religions of agency (like Christianity, Islam, and Judaism), but religions of disengagement, the quelling of anxiety, the abolition of desire, etc.

In other words, I believe that our struggle with the Vietnam War -- the mental and spiritual anguish it created -- involved a deeply-felt religious transformation.

I would like to study this. I would like to focus some expert attention upon it. And I would like to circulate the results of our deliberations, once again, in the interests of providing sure, steady, and cumulative progress in an area both of us take to be absolutely vital.

A third specific project goes by the name (suggested to me by the distinguished philosopher from San Francisco State, Jacob Needleman) of "the pathology of enthusiasm". Needleman is interested in continuing the work of Eric Hoffer, for example, on what constitutes "the true believer". He

believes that there is some intrinsic tie between religious enthusiasm, war fervor, the role of the demonic in human culture, the new phenomenon of "de-programming" (as in the religion of the "Moonies"), the attractiveness of Hitler, etc. The Warburg Institute in London initiated work in this field more than a half century ago. Part of it was generated out of a fascination with the ability of German Expression (in both art and literature) to predict, even by 1911, that Germany could succumb to fanaticism.

I'd like to pick up on this theme. The occasion for it is here once again. Indeed, the conditions are all around us, as recent articles in the Los Angeles Times attest. But we haven't gotten to the bottom of it yet. And yet it seems that we could tap most promising resources in exploring the phenomenon further.

I can't promise that the project would lead to an abolition of war. But I do know that the results would influence the way in which persons understand human life, and I know that all of this focuses directly upon the problem of war. In other words, I think this project will also qualify as a means of attaining a sure, steady, and cumulative breakthrough in this area which is absolutely vital to humankind.

I cite these three projects only, knowing that this is just the beginning. Our resources are limited, of course, but we have a large company of resources within earshot. I refer not only to the persons we can attract through the University of California, but also to those who can come into the picture through the Council on the Study of Religion. I can promise with full assurance that we can give each of these projects the very best treatment.

There are costs involved, of course. But, as you survey these, please be assured that we are talking about direct costs only. The instrumentation -- including the office space, the typewriters, duplicating machines, telephones, equipment, not to mention the necessary institutions (the Institute, the Council, indeed, the University) -- is already available. Thus, we are not talking about a private project, but about a powerful institutional sponsorship and custodianship. This, I believe, is an important sustaining force.

I have sketched a tentative budget (attached). Naturally, if this overture leads to a formal proposal, the budget will need to be formalized by persons in the University who are expert in these matters.

I want the force of this letter to rest not upon the budget but upon my own personal commitment toward furthering the objectives for which I know you stand and toward which you have contributed such extraordinarily rich and deep efforts. I truly believe that the projects I have sketched are harmonious with your aspirations as well as with the University's stated "mission". I also recognize them to be do-able.

Thank you for the opportunity of making this presentation. But, much more, thank you for your friendship and for the inspiration you have given me.

Sincerely,

Walter H. Capps
Director, Institute of

Religious Studies