

96

163 Anstey's Building,  
Joubert Street,  
Johannesburg.  
28th April 1959.

Dear Mr. Paton,

The S. A. Peace Council - from whose activities I am banned - have consulted me about a problem, which I am now passing on to you:

The Anti-A & H. Bomb Council of Japan are arranging an international conference in Japan in August. The Joint Council of the Australian and New Zealand Peace Councils are also arranging an international conference against A and H. Bombs in November in Melbourne - Congress for Disarmament and International Co-operation. In each case, the Sponsoring Committee is anxious to have a South African of international repute present at the Congress and willing to speak as an artist on various aspects of the relationship between Culture and Peace. In each case, the Sponsoring Committee is willing to pay the whole or part of a return-airfare.

Is it possible for you to accept both invitations or one of them?

As I understand it, you would attend in your individual capacity and speak for yourself alone. In so doing, however, I am confident you would be expressing the thoughts of the Congresses and the Liberal Party on the relationship between liberation and colonial wars. (The thought occurs to me - but maybe I am premature - that the Congresses and your own Party would be glad to nominate you as their representative. *and, of course, the S. A. Peace Council itself. But that would be in your decision*)

If there is the smallest possibility of your travelling to one or both of the Congresses, may I beg you to accept these invitations and these responsibilities. Two years ago sixty theatre workers signed a protest against nuclear tests and sent it to the Prime Minister. Beyond that I don't think a single South African artist has spoken out against the test-dangers. It's too bad that we people who labour in the field of culture are placidly accepting the possibility that all we do can be destroyed by a single bomb.

I attended the World Peace Assembly at Helsinki three years ago and unhesitatingly say it was the most valuable experience imaginable. You are probably more used to international gatherings,

but for me it was a magnificent, broadening and uplifting experience. You know, I'm sure, the joy for a South African to be part of a genuine, relaxed multiracial gathering. It was marvellous. I met such wonderful people, too, unknown and famous - what a daily breathing of vital fresh air!

I think I will enclose the letter from the Australian people for you to read. I don't suppose they will insist on your being a singer or dancer! But you can talk! Will you return this letter to me please.

In the unhappy event that you are quite unable to attend either Congress, would you let me have a message or a statement which could be sent to both Congresses. But do strain every nerve to make an appearance in person.

An early reply would be appreciated.

With best wishes,

*Yours sincerely,  
Oscar Williams*

*The S.A. Peace Council would love to send as well an African singer or instrumentalist. They are going into that project, but it has difficulties and, in any case, would be independent of your going.*

96  
23 Lynton Road,  
KLOOF,  
Natal.

14th May, 1959.

Dear Mr. Williams,

I am sorry that I am unable to accept either of the invitations. I am trying to get back to serious writing, and I think you will be one of the first to understand that this is a demanding occupation.

I saw your production of the KIMBERLEY TRAIN in Durban, and congratulate you on it.

If I have any success with my play, THE LAST JOURNEY, I shall probably turn to that kind of writing.

I am returning the letter from the Australian Peace Council.

Yours sincerely,

**Collection Number: AD1169**

**Collection Name: Alan Paton Papers, 1952-1988**

***PUBLISHER:***

*Publisher:* Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand

*Location:* Johannesburg

©2016

***LEGAL NOTICES:***

**Copyright Notice:** All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

**Disclaimer and Terms of Use:** Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document forms part of the archive of the South African Institute of Race Relations, held at the Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.