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19 May 2003
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Representative Martin T. Meehan
c/o U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

Reference: Your visit on 23 April with the Sudbury Democratic Town Committee at the Goodnow Library.

Dear Mr. Meehan:

In behalf of the Sudbury Democratic Town Committee (SDTC), I wish to thank you for having found time from your legislative duties to visit us and discuss frankly a variety of issues of great interest in these politically troubled times.

One of the purposes of this letter is to make clear the political position of the SDTC as currently constituted. We view ourselves as activists and oppose the Bush Administration on almost every point. Recently, we opposed the Iraq War through a public resolution, newspaper letters and editorials, and weekly peace vigils; sponsored on 8 May a public forum about the USA-PATRIOT Act and related assaults on Civil Rights; and hope to gain the support of Sudbury in adopting a non-compliance resolution against what we view as unconstitutional infringements of Civil Rights by the federal government. We also developed arguments supporting major reductions in military spending that were published in April as a two-part editorial, the text of which was given to you upon your visit. In addition, we are concerned with state and local issues, including some relating to the plans of Gov. Romney to reorganize state government and budget. One local project we hope soon to begin is the compilation of an email list of Democratic voters in Sudbury. Overarching individual issues, however, is the need to reverse what appears to be a progressive destruction of Constitutional Democracy by the Bush Administration and moneyed allies. We are facing what may be a unique crisis in the history of the US, and for this reason we expect much of Democratic Congressmen and -women from Massachusetts. Indeed, we need legislators of the right stuff who can oppose Republican programs vigorously, intelligently and vociferously. We need people who can embrace traditional Democratic principles and develop programs and platforms that are just, equitable, and speak to our collective best interests.

Based on your voting record and accomplishments in Congress, we know you as one of the leading Democratic Representatives, whom we much admire and honor. It was therefore surprising that you conveyed a somewhat different image in the meeting of 23 April. For the sake of honesty and frankness, we feel obliged to convey our sense of your presentation, for whatever it is worth.

You chose not to discuss your affirmative votes on the USA-PATRIOT Act and War Powers Resolution. You sit on the House Armed Services Committee, but seem unable so far to

use that position to advocate and popularize the need to downsize the military for the sake of domestic programs. In response to questions, you seemed in agreement with this need. When asked whether you would vote to repeal the USA-PATRIOT Act, given the opportunity, you equivocated and were vague on details. Although you seemed to support the need for national health insurance, we had hoped to hear of plan and procedure. You complained at length of how you were attacked after making a remark about plausible targets during the 9/11/01 event, without seeming to realize that this is an inconsequential matter best laid to rest. Indeed, it can be argued that political attack and counter-attack are all part of your job and cannot be avoided. In short, we were hoping for a lion but seemed to meet something of a lamb. We had the impression of a Democrat willing to placate the Republican majority on some issues and remain invisible on some others, of a man frustrated and somewhat politically adrift. If these impressions are wide of the mark, we do apologize.

We agree that the record and intentions of the Bush Administration are appalling and that life under a Republican majority in the House must be profoundly difficult, particularly given the current muddle of leadership within the Democratic Party. Nevertheless, it is important for the out party to play the role of the loyal opposition and fight with all available means against retrogressive proposals of that Republican majority. We therefore expect our Democratic representatives to produce and advocate well conceived alternatives to destructive Republican legislation, with the intention to block or modify such legislation for the better and to win the favor of voters.

With this in mind, we ask you to continue the good fight, stay out of Bush's camp and do what you can to bring unity of purpose to the Democratic national leadership. And do all of this with loud publicity. For our part, we should appreciate your views as to how we local Democratic Committees might better serve the party.

Sincerely,

Thomas C Hollocher, Secretary, SDTC.