Culbertson, Montana
May 3, 1959

Dear Harry and Gretchen:

Sincere and heartfelt congratulations on your Sidney Hillman award for outstanding editorials on civil liberties and welfare.

It gives me real joy to know that your hard work - often seemingly unappreciated - has been recognized for its true quality and value. I can imagine what a lift this will give you after plodding along, maybe sometimes wondering if it is all worthwhile.

I know you are both highly worthy of this recognition and rejoice with you as

A real friend

Alfred

Alfred Anderson
Mr. & Mrs. Harry Billing's
The People's Voice
Helena, Montana

Dear Friends:

The members of Local #72 East Helena Smeltermen's Union at this time wish to congratulate the both of you for being selected to receive one of the Hillman award's.

We have been aware of the great service you both have been doing for the working people and the farm people of the state and feel that the awarding of the Hillman Foundation Award could not have been given to any one more deserving.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Local Recording Secretary
May 3, 1959

Mr. & Mrs. Harry Billing's
The People's Voice
Helena, Montana

Dear Friends:

The members of Local #72 East Helena Smeltermen's Union at this time wish to congratulate the both of you for being selected to receive one of the Hillman award's.

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Sincerely,

[Signature]
Local Recording Secretary
July 14, 1957

Mr. Lloyd A. Johnson, Recording Secretary
EAST MILESA M & S UNION, LOCAL 172
East Helena, Montana

Dear Mr. Johnson,

Harry and I were sure pleased to get your letter of congratulations about our receiving the Hillman Foundation Award, and the delay in answering has not been from lack of appreciation, but because we seem to get our lives fouled up in everything we have to do, and I am our only secretary, which is about as complicated here as being your own grandma.

We have received so many wonderful letters...in fact the whole thing has been pretty wonderful.

And in the final analysis, Harry and I aren't so naive, but that we realize that this award would never have been possible if it hadn't been for the support given the publication by guys like you.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Grothenn G. Hillings
Mr. and Mrs. Harry Billings
The People's Voice
Helena, Montana

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Billings:

I note with a great deal of pleasure the excellent article by Mrs. Paladin concerning the Historical Society of Montana in the May 1 issue of The People's Voice.

The prominence which you give the article and the generous pictures, which reproduce much better than in the average newspaper, will do a great deal to make your readers aware of the services which the Society can render. Now that you have the Hillman Award, we will have to think up another for this type of public service.

I am sure the staff of the Society will appreciate this desirable type of publicity, as will the Board of Trustees. Please accept my thanks, personally, and as a member of the Board.

With best wishes for continued success with your stimulating paper, and with best personal regards,

Very truly yours,

Merrill G. Burlingame, Bozeman

Aug 15, 1959
May 4, 1959

Dear Mr. Billings:

I am having The Nation sent to you with our compliments. I hope you will let us hear from you from time to time with comments and suggestions about it, and ideas for the magazine. Also, you are at liberty if you wish to reprint all or any part of any article, giving proper credit and sending us marked copies.

I enjoyed very much what you had to say at the Sidney Hillman Foundation luncheon.

Best wishes,

Carey McWilliams
Editor

Mr. Harry Billings
The People's Voice
Helena, Montana

Received 8-5-59
May 4, 1959

Dearest Gretch and Harry:

Just a quick note at the office to tell you how proud I was of your award. J. D. Colman who announces for KBTX had this to say about you, and I told him that if he would give me a copy of his editorial I would send it to you and maybe you have a copy of your editorial(s) that you would send me -- we would all like to read it or them.

Everything is going fine for me. Haven't been down to Plains for quite a while but Rosie was up and brought me some strawberry plants for Penn's strawberry pyramid that he built in the back yard. We are gardening like crazy and I just hope it doesn't wear off when weeding time comes. Tina may be home the last week in May. Your dear dad and mom stop once in awhile. They are such a pleasure to visit with and I wish I could see them oftener. Dan and family were over for the week end last month and he is doing very well. The dear little boys are a treat to see, and the same to go.

Must get on with it. We have several important cases coming up and jury begins again tomorrow.

Remember when you are in town that the house is always unlocked should you wish to run over even when I'm not at home.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections Montana State University, Bozeman Do Not Duplicate Without Permission
HELENA, MONTANA

The People's Voice

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Biltzinger
EDITORIAL  BROADCAST  MONDAY, APRIL 27, 1959  ON KBTK, MISSOULA

For some reason, which immediately escapes us, there was a minimum of publicity last week on the fact that two Montanans received a national press award.

KBTK believes there should be some notice of this award.

Last Friday, Harry and Gretchen Billings, of the Montana People's Voice in Helena, were presented one of the five 1958 Sidney Hillman Foundation awards for "editorials on civil liberties and welfare" during the year.

The awards were presented at a luncheon in the Hotel Roosevelt in New York City.

In addition to a cash prize of $500, the couple received an all-expense trip to New York for the presentation ceremonies.

To prove that this award was not a minor league affair, here are the four other 1958 award winners:

John Kenneth Galbraith, of Harvard University, for his book, THE AFFLUENT SOCIETY.

Ralph McGill, for his editorial columns on integration in the ATLANTA (Ga.) CONSTITUTION.

Harvey Swados, for his articles, "Myth of the Powerful Worker" in THE NATION Magazine, and,

Irving Gitlin for his supervision of CBS Radio "Unit One," particularly the programs on Korean POW's and the program, "Who Killed Michael Farmer."

Prior to the award to Mr. and Mrs. Billings, the Hillman prize had been awarded only one other Montanan---Vic Reinemer. A graduate of the MSU Journalism, Reinemer won the coveted award in 1954 while an editorial writer for the Charlotte, N. C., News.

We think the family Billings should be congratulated for having

brought back an award of this scope to a state where aggressive editorializing is a rarity.
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.
May 5, 1959

Mr. and Mrs. Harry L. Billings
553 Highland
Helena, Montana

Dear Gretchen and Harry:

I am forwarding herewith the picture which our friend Vic arranged on the occasion of your luncheon visit in the Capitol last week.

By now I know you feel like sleeping and resting for a week but realize that you face a mountainous load picking up all the odds and ends of work which have accumulated since you left two weeks ago.

We all surely enjoyed your visit here and wish that, now that you know the way, you would come back again for the Democratic inauguration in 1961 when we could really whoop it up.

My best to yez.

Sincerely,

Mike

Mike Deevy
Executive Secretary

MD: JW
Enclosure

Answered 5/11/59
May 6, 1959

Mr. & Mrs. Harry Billings  
People's Voice  
1205 Lockey  
Helena, Montana  

Dear Gretchen and Harry:

First of all, congratulations upon your receiving the Hillman Award. I was very happy for you and I have been voicing my praise of you and of the fact that the award was certainly justified. I am terribly disappointed in newspapers around Montana in that they didn't give you the recognition for having received this award that I thought you were entitled to. But, that's life, and that's what kind of lousy newspapers we have in this state.

Enclosed find a comment made regarding the recent prison riot by a Bill Stout of the Beverly Hills Times. I haven't any idea whether or not the State Prison had this comment coming. I have forwarded it to you for whatever use you might make of it.

I'll be out your way for a visit one of these days but I find the United States mails more dependable and quick service than my own bearing of these messages.

With kindest personal regards, I am  

Your friend,

[Signature]

Arnold Olsen

AO: jj  
Encl.
May 6, 1959

Mrs. Avery Bates
Route One
Manhattan, Montana

My dear Sister Mary:

Congratulations! Your recent award, the Dorothy Keener Award, for your wonderful performance, pleased me to see your success in your work. With the help of our Congressional delegation, again congratulations.

Sincerely

Avery Bates

Please send our congratulations to your family for our trip to Rome.
May 6, 1959

Dear Gretchen and Harry:

A few days ago I received a copy of THE CAMAS HOT SPRINGS EXCHANGE which "JR" had mailed to me, and was indeed pleased and interested in reading the biographical sketches and seeing the photos of yo-all.

I explained to Mrs. B. (Bobbie) who you are, and told her about the time Gretchen came to Chicago and we met her at the airport, and how I surprised her - after it had been planned to surprise me. She got a laugh out of it.

We are having wonderful weather in "Sunny California", and the grape fruit and the orange trees in our back yard are beginning to show the fruit we will have as it grows and ripens. I have not heard from the folks in Plains for some time, altho I wrote to them some weeks' ago. I hope that they are well.

With kindest regards, I am,

Sincerely yours
We're all pleased to know you'll be around these parts for a bit and are looking forward to taking our favorite editor-types out on the town. Let me know when you can guess what dates you'll be here—assume we should shoot for the night out early in the week of 4-26. I'll make reservation—when you let me know—at Continental instead of Dodge. Better chow, same area, similar rates—most of FU people stay there. I'M JE2-1906 at home, CAPitol 4-3121, ext. 2652 at office. I got the Hillman for 1954. Will be nice if the Holtzes can come along.

Add happy thought, in case you haven't had it yet—prize money is not taxable! See ya.

Vic and Lois Reinemer
Mr. and Mrs. Harry Billings
Helena Montana

Box 938
Mr. Barry Billings, Editor
People’s Voice
1205 Lockey St.
Helena, Mont.

My dear Mr. Billings:

I met Vic Reinemer the other day, and he asked me whether you and your wife had seen me. The answer was "no," but it brought to my mind that my wife had told me "someone from Montana" had phoned me last Saturday at home.

She suggested to you to phone the office, but that was undoubtedly during the noon hour when we were all out to lunch. The switchboard operator doesn’t work on Saturdays. I regret my wife didn’t alert you to phone back after lunch, because I would have been very happy to meet both of you, particularly because of your kinship to my good friend, John Garber.

Reinemer also reminded me of a point I had overlooked—that you had won a Sidney Hillman foundation award. I surely want to congratulate you for the fine honor.

Also, would you send us some details about the award, and if you have glossy pictures of yourself and Mrs. Billings, please send us prints. We may endeavor to do a little story, within the next few weeks, if space permits.

If I recall rightly, Mrs. Billings is John’s daughter. Incidentally, if you have ever worked on the railroads, please mention also.

I might add that I haven’t seen the People’s Voice for a long time. We used to get it on our exchange list, but that was quite a while ago. If an exchange is agreeable to you, please let us know.

On second thought, please mail the information and the photos to me at the Schroeder Hotel, Milwaukee, Wis. I’ll be there from Monday, May 11, through Friday May 15, at the convention of the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks, and I could get the story out of the way while there.

Best wishes,

Sincerely,

Editor and Manager
May 11, 1958

Mr. Huben Levin, Editor
LABOR
Schroeder Hotel
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Dear Editor Levin:

I plead guilty to having called you at your home, Saturday, May 2. Also, called both office numbers. No reply. I, off to Library of Congress and other spots balance of day, and, of course, forgot to try again to reach you that evening.

Gretchen is John Gerber's daughter. John, as you know, was with AT&SF. He had another brother, long since deceased, who was an FP freight conductor. Also, his dad, J.D. Gerber was an employee (conductor, later years) NF, for half a century. Gretchen's mother, J.J., was at one time an NF telegrapher. Seems, her family was all wrapped up in railroading.

Neither of us have ever worked on the railroad. We have, however, for more than a dozen years worked in very close coordination with the Joint Legislative Committee of Montana rail brotherhoods, both during legislative sessions and in between.

I note you are in Milwaukee for HRG convention. It may be of interest to you to learn that our eldest son, John Gerber Billings, is a member of the HRG, and is employed in the freight end of Northwest Airlines, Seattle.

The enclosed biographical sketches which we prepared for Sidney Hillman Foundation, while much too long for a busy editor to have to go over, give a pretty complete pic of Gretchen and my backgrounds, work, etc.

The enclosed glossy, I'm sorry to say, is the last one of two dozen we had made up from a picture taken first part of April this year. It's had one cut made off it for my International's journal, ITU, but I believe it may do.

As for an exchange, I'm all for it. We're putting you on lists this week, and sending back copies to your Washington office.

Thanks for your letter and for also the possibility of a story in LABOR. Our many rail union subscribers, I'm sure, will be quite pleased to see mention in their "Bible", LABOR.

Yours very truly,

Harry L. Billings

P.S. We like Washington, only like New York. We will come back, some day.
MEMORANDUM

From the Desk of

FRANK MURRAY

May 8

Dear Harry & Gretchen:

Welcome home and I was really thrilled to learn of your high honors and the wonderful awards and trips that you folks were able to make. Best wishes and keep up the good work.

Frank & Gerry
MEMO — from

Len Furman — State Editor

Mr. Harry Billings
People's Voice
Helena, Montana

Dear Mr. Billings:

We wonder whether you might spare some
time to be our "editor of the week."

You can write the article yourself
(without by-line, of course) or you
can complete the accompanying form.

In any case, we should like to re-print
some of the editorials that won you and
your wife the Hillman award for public
service editorials.

Many thanks for your consideration and
kind regards.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Leonard Furman

The Publishers' Auxiliary
210 S. Desplaines St., Chicago
Andover 3-1838
Mr. & Mrs. Billings
Helena, Mont.

Dear friends - We congratulate you for winning that National Award and getting a trip to New York & Washington, as Teddy Roosevelt would put it, I am "delighted" to know folks that are red blooded Americans who are not afraid to stand up and be counted."

Keep up the good work of printing the news as it is, as no enemy of the known about some of the deals" that have been made. I've wrote he enjoyed your visit in Washington.

Yours Truly

Jan. 15th

H.R. and Mrs. Reinemer
May 14, 1959

Harry and Gretchen Billings
Peoples Voice
Helena, Montana

Dear friends:

Although we have never met I feel that we are friends for I have been reading the Peoples Voice ever since I came to work for the North Dakota Farmers Union and I have had a very warm spot in my heart for Harry and Gretchen Billings in their crusade for people, carried on through the pages of the Peoples Voice.

I have often wanted to write and express our appreciation of the fine work you are doing but when I read that you had received the Sidney Hillman award, I knew I must, this day, write and extend to you my sincerest congratulations on receiving the award which you have so justly earned.

We were so thrilled to know you had been so honored and I'm sure it was a thrilling experience to both of you.

May you have many years of service ahead of you and may you continue your courageous crusade for the people of Montana and for people every where.

Very sincerely yours,

Mrs. Lulu Evanson
Farmers Union Resource Library
Jamestown, North Dakota

LE:sd
RETIRO CABINS
ON LAKE FIVE

Strawberries
Vegetables
Fresh Milk
Groceries
Lunches

J. H. RIDENOUR
473 12th Ave. N.
Kalispell
Butte, Montana

May 18, 1959

Mrs. Mrs. Harry Billings,
Helena, Montana.

Dear Harry & Hutchan:

We have been reading with great pleasure the various press notices of the award you have received for your fine work. We have long recognized the merit of your work and we are glad with you. We have followed closely your reports on the tariff act of the legislature and on state affairs and appreciate the information as a valuable service.

I wish we were able to contribute more to such work but we are retired now with limited security.

Here in a check for further subscription which will help a little and if you at anytime find yoursel entire and thoroughly enjoy a visit with you.

Sincerely,

J. H. Ridenour

Lake Shore Cabins
Boating-Fishing
Service Station
Bathing Beach
Souvenirs

Mrs. Harry Billings,
Helena, Montana.

5/21/59

Dear friends, I join along with your and we sure Remember the visit with you and at your home and we would be so happy that you come only here (in) the center and we live along as good as can expect to. We are retired and it is surprising how.
How fast the time goes. My sister from Ohio has been with us since last April and so we have spent a lot of time talking our old times and places and such. and we have all enjoyed the TV programs, but think how great it would be if we might have programs of a higher standard, less liquor, gambling and such affairs. A course in a better way of life for all people. A bit of World peace and friendship less about fighting. It is more for helping others live instead of a way to kill our enemies. Which I don't think we have any. We are expecting Company soon from Denver. My niece husband and his sister in law and her brand daughter from Pittsburg Kansas. And also a sister in law of his brand daughter from Pittsburg Kansas. My brother's wife. We lost him last fall. He was just retired from Ministry, feel in his own back yard with head

attacked. Yes sir, now there are only 2 or 3 sisters left any more. To day 2 letters come from our Cousins in Ft Jones Cality. Who wants to come to visit them this Summer. I did some Cousins from the Dakota plan on seeing us this Summer. I do like some Cousins from the Dakota plan on coming who we have not seen in over 50 years in the future. And are Coming. Who we have not seen in over 50 years. So the future looks interesting and time is going to fast. Please do take Care of your health for the world needs such as you good people.

Sincerely, Mande
Dear Berthin Harry,

We are so happy for both of you to have this chance for a wonderful trip. It was about time somebody found out what a wonderful people you are and we want to congratulate you from the bottom of our hearts.

We sure missed you folks this winter but it show how people will fall for the but instead of the truth but the democrat never did any work in our county except Martin's D. and I see the same ones cause Hofland is next. He had a nice trip to Washington D.C and have dinner with al our
Dad, Mom, and Jan may not like me.

Mars is a place.

If you drink red wine, let it be dry.

Please remember that I want to be a writer.

If you are going to be patient, I'm ready.

I love you.

Can't wait to see you.
May 15, 1957

Dear folks,

Just a belated note to extend my congratulations on the 21st man award which you so well deserve.

Did you make the trip through the Park Betcher? What were you planning to do?

I was very happy to see you on the 21st. It is a little difficult to make your plans when you are very happy, but you can always do it.

Best wishes,

[Signature]
The dreamers are often not popular in their life time. To them, it does not matter. The task of a better world and knowing that sooner or later it will come is all the reward they ever want or care for.

Sincerely,
Lydia Sullivan

Dear folks,

Congratulations.

I was so happy to see what you won the Sidney Hillman Award. I feel that you richly deserved the honor.

You may be a voice crying in the wilderness for a long period of
time, but time
marches on and
sooner or later
public thrust
will catch up
with your
ideas and you
will have the
satisfaction?
Knowing what
your time and
effort has been
worth while.
I often
think "Woodrow
Wilson" when
she fought so
bravely for
the League of
Nations and this
comment some
day it will
come, maybe
eventually. A
better fourth
than I have advocated.
We now have
the United Nations
which we doubt
will fulfill his
most fervent hopes.
May 19, 1959

Mr. Harry L. Billings, Editor
THE PEOPLE'S VOICE
Helena, Montana

Dear Mr. Billings:

I wanted to express my appreciation for the good coverage you provided on the Wilderness Bill through the column by William Bohn.

This type of constructive treatment of this important legislation does much to rid people of some of the misapprehensions that have been spread about this vital legislation. As you appreciate, the Wilderness Bill does not threaten the economy of our western states in any way. It will serve to perpetuate some of the irreplaceable outdoor areas with which our State is so richly endowed.

May I offer my congratulations to you folks for being named recipients of the Sidney-Hillman award. I was delighted to learn that your long and devoted service has received this recognition and that this outstanding tribute was paid to your accomplishments.

Sincerely yours,

STEWART M. BRANDBORG,
Assistant Conservation Director
July 15, 1959

Mr. Stewart M. Brandborg
232 Carroll Street, Northwest
Takoma Park, Washington 12, D.C.

Dear Mr. Brandborg,

It has been a long time since we received your letter concerning the treatment we gave the Wilderness Bill through the column by William Bohn, and the kind words about the Sidney Hillman award, but my excuses are many, and lengthy, the biggest...the work load here. I dashay from one job to another, and work my correspondence in between times, so I'm really behind the 8 ball on this. We received so many letters!

We want to thank you for your letter, on both matters, and whenever you think there is something that should be called to our attention...do it!

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Gretchen O. Billings
May 20, 1959

Senator Mike Mansfield
Senate Office Building
Washington D. C.

Dear Mike,

A quick and belated note to tell you how good it was to see you, if only for a few minutes, while we were in Washington.

We know how very busy you are.

When Harry's mother saw the picture taken at lunch she began worrying immediately about whether you were well or not. She thought you looked thin. I assured her the picture angle was the problem, and that like me, you would probably always be thin.

Leon is being graduated from the University in June, and hopes to be in Washington to go on to school, this fall. He said last night he might go back after school is out and look around. He will probably come in and say hello.

That, sir, is our BABY! It seems impossible.

Our best to you, Maureen and Ann.

Sincerely,

Gretchen G. Billings
Hon. Senator James E. Murray  
Senate Office Building  
Washington, D. C.  

Dear Senator,  

Harry and I want to thank you for your gracious hospitality while we were in Washington. We were honored to be your guests at luncheon, and pleased to have a chance to visit you in your office.  

We were happy to find you in such fine fettle, and it is satisfaction we are reporting to the folks here at home that you intend to stay in the fight.  

Your wonderful staff made our stay in D.C. one we will long remember, too. They have always been of invaluable service to all of us out here when we needed it, and it was good to see them in action.  

Again our thanks, and when you come home, come and see us.

Sincerely,  

Gretchen G. Billings  
5/20/59
May 26, 1959

Mrs. Hulda R. Billings,
50 The People Fire
Boz. 835.
Helena, Montana

Dear Mrs. Billings:

Thank you for your nice letter of May 13. I was so glad to read about the visit to you and Harry and about the ensuing trip.

I started a formal letter in regard to the telephone matter, but found that I need to go to the Federal Communications Commission to get some figures that I think will be very helpful for your purposes. Being hard pressed for a few days by other commitments, I have to beg your indulgence for a little delay. Then I hope to lay your indulgence for a little delay. Then I will check the little note to let you know that I am not overlooking your query and that you will definitely hear from me shortly.

Still look upon my Montana trip as one of my most pleasant experiences of the past ten years. I am sorry Mr. Todd is unhappy, nevertheless I would be glad to repeat the experience if the opportunity presents itself.

Sincerely,

Laurence S. Knappen
Mr. and Mrs. Harry Billings  
The People's Voice  
Helena, Montana

Dear Harry and Gretchen:

I have been following with much interest the report of your visit to the East to receive the Sidney Hillman Foundation award for outstanding editorials on civil liberties and the public welfare.

This is a very fine award and is appropriate recognition for the excellent services which you have rendered in the field of journalism in Montana. Last week in New York, where I was attending a National Manpower Council meeting, Jacob Potofsky told me how pleased he was to have you folks on hand to receive the award. We had a good visit together about the Billings' and Montana in general.

It is always nice to see a Montanan honored but especially nice when it occurs to special and particular friends.

Sincerely,

Roland R. Renne
President

RRR:cm
July 12, 1959

Dr. R. R. Renne, President
MONTANA STATE COLLEGE
Bozeman, Montana

Dear Dr. Renne,

It was so good to get your letter of congratulations way back in May, and the delay in acknowledging it has been because of pressure of life in this place. I have been speaking at County Farmers Union picnics and that has taken all of my week-ends. When I do this things fall to pieces all around me, not leastly my good intentions.

My last one is for July 19, then I hope to catch up with things here and at home.

But I had a few minutes this afternoon, so I got out my file and am starting to try and catch up. I tell you I have been flabbergasted at the mail we have received. In fact we have received everything from love letters to hate ones.

It was indeed an honor to be chosen to receive one of the Billman Awards, and a great part of the pleasure was the enthusiastic response from our friends.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Gretchen G. Billings
May 26, 1959

Mr. & Mrs. Billings
The People's Voice
Helena, Montana

Dear Harry and Gretchen:

It was a real thrill to read of your winning the Hillman award. Very best wishes for your continued success and public service.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

K.H. Johansen
July 14, 1959

Mr. R. L. Johansen
FARMERS UNION GRAIN TERMINAL ASSOCIATION
St. Paul 1, Minnesota

Dear Mr. Johansen,

Harry and I want to thank you for your note that we received way back in May about our receiving a Sidney Hillman Award.

One of the great pleasures of the whole affair has been hearing from so many people, and in a sense it was a happy "sharing".

I am just now getting at finishing up answering the many letters we received. In fact it has been a bit staggering how many have come to us. My answering has been delayed due to a very busy summer speaking schedule that takes up my week-ends, and I suppose my age is catching up with me and slows me down, too.

Next time Harry decides to become famous he better hire a secretary.

Sincerely,

Gretchen G. Billings
Mrs. Gretchen G. Billings
The People's Voice
Box 838
Helena, Montana

Dear Gretchen:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of May 20th.

As you perhaps know, Senator Mansfield went out to Gonzaga University to give the commencement speech and is now on his way back. You may be assured that we will be happy to bring your letter to his attention upon his return.

We are sure that both you and Harry, as well as the Holtzs, had a very good trip and got a great deal out of it. It was very nice seeing both of you.

With best personal wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

Peggy Demichele
Administrative Assistant to
SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD
Dear Harry and Gretchen—

Suppose you globe-trotters are now back from the city with your justly deserved reward. At this not so well-publicized you have always had such honors from those of us who have long credited you with the main ingredient which is so lacking in the press of today—principle—and the will to stick to principles regardless of pressure.

Congratulations to you both and regards.

J. S. Turrell

310 New York Building
St. Paul 1, Minnesota

May 7, 1959
May 27, 1959

Mrs. Gretchen G. Billings
THE PEOPLE'S VOICE
Box 838
Helena, Montana

Dear Mrs. Billings:

I enjoyed your letter and your comments. Which leads me to an inquiry: could I reprint portions of it, or would you rather prepare something special, in the Amalgamated newspaper, The Advance? This goes to our 385,000 members, none of whom live in Montana, many of whom live in industrial cities where the problems you encounter would be a revelation. Any friendly words you might express regarding the reaction you have received to your winning the award would also be warmly appreciated.

I will look forward to hearing from you, and with best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

Howard D. Samuel
Executive Director
Congratulations and Best Wishes
for the
Sidney Hillman
Foundation Award.

Congratulations!

Good luck

too.

And happiness your
whole life through.

I am so
happy for you
Marvel.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?

3 - 1

BY GRETCHEN G. BILLINGS

I wonder if the time will ever come again when we will talk about peace without hurting the chances of it?

The world is a powder keg. My blood turns to water when listening to the news, knowing that our sons will have to partake in the outcome of a spark hitting the keg.

There must be other mothers who feel that there is little in this world that is worth the lives of their male offspring.

What are we going to do about it?
We are cowards.

Why is it that we will fight with everything at our command to save them from harm from birth to draft age, and then sit by and make not the faintest sound when the clarion call of war beckons them to give their lives?

Do we ask if there is some other way?
We are visited with the spectre of unpatriotic intentions. We are becoming deeply imbued with the philosophy that says “our country right or wrong,” but isn’t it our right to question until the moment comes when the life of the country is at stake?

The life of the nation is like the life of a family. We work to keep everyone on a peaceful track, but all else failing we defend the family and the nation with all we have, when they need us.

It is well and good to listen to all this high sounding talk about “national honor,” but I could take a lot of guff to have my sons live to make me a grandmother a dozen times.

We have a terrific investment in these three male creatures. We have raised them as best we know how to be good citizens. We have tried to teach them their obligation to their home, their community, their nation.

But all these months the horror of sending them to war has boiled within me, and I haven’t known what to say about it; I haven’t known what would help and what would hurt; I haven’t had the courage to yell from the housetops, “I don’t want my boys to die in a useless war.”

Would war be useful?
Has it ever been?

We are the greatest nation in the world and we have at our command the facilities to bring peace to the world, and yet we quibble over feeding hungry people and cut back the expenditures that would teach them the wonders of democracy and spend our national substance on building the machines of war.

We see forces as close to home as the legislature fighting with tenacity to protect property and financial interests, the same forces are at work in the national Congress—but where is the fight being made to protect our human interests—our youth—the children we have nurtured with love, and, if you please considerable financial investment.

I can never replace my sons.

And yet any efforts I may make to save them is viewed with a jaundiced eye, while the efforts of those who would save replaceable property are cheered and given huzzahs as they sally forth.

I am not the only mother in America who does not want to send her boys to war.

What can I say to help?
Route I, West
Glasgow, Mont.
May 27, 1959

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Billings,

I was overjoyed by the news that you won the Sidney Hillman Award for outstanding editorials on civil liberties and the public welfare. It is really wonderful to know the United States is over the black days of press censorship. You have long deserved national recognition for the unwavering battle you have waged for the people of Montana against the Industrial Giant which threatens to subjugate us all.

Inclosed is Gretchen's "What Do You Think" article for March 4, 1955. I like to think it may have had a small part in the winning of that award. Written when the clouds of McCarthyism threatened all who dared to speak for peace, it showed great courage.

My work in spreading your gospel has been laid aside by what I think I can do better. For the last two and a half years I have been working full time in Glasgow's general hospital as a nurse aide. It is the most useful and satisfying thing I have ever done.

Still, my usefulness is limited by ignorance so with the kind help of the teachers and principal here, I have begun a correspondence course which will see me through high school. My goal is very ambitious. I hope to try for Nurse Training. It will be a hard battle but I feel equal to it. I love nursing and want to learn more about it.

Keep on with your good work and may the future bring you many more awards and recognition for your efforts.

Sincerely yours,

Marvel B. Cotton

Marvel B. Cotton
July 15, 1959

Dear Marvel,

It has been a long time since we received your good letter about our receiving the Hillman award for journalism, but I've been real sneaky about this thing—w e received so many letters that I have put those from people I knew would understand at the bottom of the pile—and you were one I was sure knew how much we have to do here, and that you would understand.

It was so nice of you to write and we certainly appreciate the letter.

I am glad to hear that you have found an effort that gives you satisfaction of being useful. I think nursing is one of the most useful things a person can do, and good nursing can be so comforting to people when they need comfort most. Often it is an impersonal business, and that really crushes a guy when he is down and out. If I get sick, I'll come where you are.

We had a wonderful time in New York and it was grand to receive the award, but we wished everyone who has worked so hard to keep the VOICE alive could have come with us, because if it hadn't been for the medium provided by the VOICE we probably never would have had the chance to win the award.

Sincerely,

Gretchen
Electric Consumers Information Committee
2000 Florida Avenue, N.W., Washington 9, D.C.

Telephone Adams 4-8405

May 28, 1959

Dear Gretchen:

Pleased you folks are interested in the idea of a pamphlet on Montana Power Co. To answer your specific questions:

* No, there is no time limit or deadline.

* As to length, I can't really give you any figure, for I'd rather not set an arbitrary length. Instead, let 'er rip and we'll see what comes out. If financially necessary, we could always cut, I assume.

* "Cold and calculating or something more informal?" Depends on definitions, I suppose. Perhaps the best answer is that I would hope for a piece which would have some bearing on the general public vs. private power fight, which could be informational to those on our side — and to those in the middle and even to those against us, whether they like it or not. Use your own style and judgment.

* The more documented the case the better, obviously. I stress this only because we would hope to put the pamphlet in the hands of some top people who have the proper prejudices but who feel more comfortable when they have facts to support those prejudices.

This answer probably doesn't help you much. But take a crack at it, please, for I feel a piece on a power corporation, 1959 style, can be very effective and make a real contribution to the goals we seek. We need to know as much as we can learn about this industry which sees public power radicals threatening its very existence — even while profits go up, up, up.

Received the subscription books — and found out it was Jack Jennings of the Cooperative League who'd talked with you about it. We'll try and get some new subs for you.

Sincerely,

Marvin Zeldin

Best to Harry.
715 So. Grand Ave.
Bozeman, Montana
May 31, 1959

Dear Gretchen and Harry,

I appreciated very much a few weeks ago the receipt of your congratulatory note. I was also pleased with the honor that recently came to you as editors of the People's Voice -- the Sidney Hillman Foundation Award. Since Mary joined the League of Women's Voters, the Voice has been in increased demand in our household for it is the best source available on state affairs.

At the moment I am much intrigued by Castro's land reform program. He is replaying the role which the Loyalists in Spain tried to play in 1936. I fear that he will get the same label and press that they got, yet it is imperative for good relations between the United States and our neighbors to the South that he succeed.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

DUNBAR