

Levi Pennington

People

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Levi Pennington Writing to Joseph Reece, October 7, 1946

Levi T. Pennington

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October 7, 1946.

Joseph G. Reece, Gen Supt.,
2904 N. E. 50th. St.,
Portland 13, Oregon.

Dear Friends:--

You expressed a desire for any thought that any of us might have on the proposed purchase of that farm in Bolivia, and I am venturing to put on paper some of the things that have occurred to me in the matter.

First of all, the Board and the rest of the yearly meeting should face the reality of the financial proposition. It is not the raising of \$13,000.00, as some one facetiously remarked yesterday, with Idaho raising \$10,000.00 and the rest of the yearly meeting raising the rest of it; it is not the raising of \$19,000.00, the difference between the \$21,000.00 it is proposed to pay now and the \$40,000.00 it will require to put the buildings in repair, buy the necessary farm machinery and equipment, etc. It is a matter of raising at least \$25,000.00, the difference between the \$15,000.00 on hand (providing all of it is good for this project though raised for the purchase of another property) and the \$40,000.00 that is required to put the project on its feet. This borrowing of money that was raised for another purpose is a dangerous proceeding at best, and the least that should be done, in my judgment, is to put on a campaign to raise enough to put back, not in the dim and distant future but as a result of this campaign, all the money that is borrowed from other funds. Using money for one purpose that was given for another is misappropriation of funds, and no matter how fully everybody agrees that the money should be borrowed, plans ought to contemplate the early restoration of those funds. A campaign for \$25,000.00 seems to me the least that should be contemplated.

I do not want to take a pessimistic view of the situation. I doubt if all the necessary repairs can be made and all the necessary equipment provided and keep the whole expenditure under \$40,000.00. As I understood it, there is something like 100 acres under cultivation on the farm now, and we were told that there are something like 25 families of Indians on the place, each having something like five acres to cultivate. Those figures do not look as if the owners of the farm did much cultivation, and how an income was maintained on such a basis, unless the grazing was exceptionally successful, is beyond me.

In any case, it seems to me that if the yearly meeting is encouraged to believe that the farm is going to be a source of income, there is likely to be serious disappointment later. It may be that under the skilful management of Paul Cammack it can be made income producing. But when I look at most of the farming in this country, and think how much more difficult it is likely to be there with the sort of help obtainable, I confess that I would expect the farm to be an expense rather than a source of income, at least for a good many years, if not permanently. That does not necessarily mean that the project should not be carried through, but I think folks ought to face that sort of possibility.

I did not feel that the question about fuel was adequately handled. I was left wondering still where the fuel for heat and cooking is to come from, not only for the farm but for the school, if it is established, as contemplated, next year. Of course if there is an adequate supply of eucalyptus trees on the place, that would answer the questions that still persist in the minds of some Friends. The suggestion of growing the fuel may be a good one, though it will take a considerable forest to furnish wood for a project of this size, and even though that tree does make a rapid growth, it would be some years after the planting of such a forest before it would be ready to harvest.

And I did not feel that the matter of the peons on the place was handled in a way that satisfied me, at least. There seemed to be no thought but to get them off the place, and supposedly where it would be more difficult to reach them with the gospel than if they were right there on the farm. Perhaps if you "talked religion" to them they would leave, as you say the folks did in the street car; but to my way of thinking that might not be a happy result, even if it worked. My guess is that it would be a long time before that peon problem was solved, even if the money were provided at once to "buy them off." That might be a matter of considerable expense beyond the \$40,000.00.

The question of irrigation, water power, etc, remains unanswered. If some of these springs are on the very high part of the farm, there would be an adequate fall so that it would not require a great volume of water to furnish sufficient power to do a great deal of work on the farm, if it could be readily harnessed. But there would be no small expense to putting in such a power plant, even if the flow of water is in a very convenient place. And if irrigation water is to come from that river that was not known until the map arrived, it probably means a pumping plant that would also cost money.

Was not the board convinced at yearly meeting time that it was the Lord's will that another place than this one be bought? Is the leading any clearer this time? It seems to me that there ought to be a very definite, clear leading before a project of this magnitude is undertaken. If there is such clear leading, and if it is God's will that this be done, there is no question that it can be done. I sincerely hope that the right leading may come to the board, and that whatever decision is made, that decision may be shown by future events to be the right one. If such a project is to be carried out successfully, will there not need to be greater unity on the field than there has been at some times in the past? And is there assurance of such unity?

I hope this letter will not make me appear as one who seeks to oppose the will of God, in this or any other matter. But these are things that it seems to me ought to be taken into consideration in reaching a decision in the matter.

Sincerely your friend,

Levi T. Pennington.