

Levi Pennington

People

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Levi Pennington Writing to Sumner Mills, October 22, 1946

Levi T. Pennington

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El Teepee, Woods,
Cloverdale, Oregon,
October 22, 1946.

Sumner A. Mills,
20 South Twelfth St.,
Philadelphia 7, Penn.

Dear Friend:--

Your letter of the 14th. followed me out here, where my wife and I are trying to get some rest and recreation. We had planned to spend the greater part of the summer here, but she was not able for the trip until now. (Much better, I thank you; indeed quite herself again.)

I wish I could write something like this: "I am on my way to Philadelphia, hoping that the American Friends Service Committee can find some use for me in the raising of funds for the relief of the suffering peoples across the seas. I am coming at my own expense, and expect so to continue if you can use me. If not, I shall seek to find a place where I can be of service to these suffering peoples through some other organization."

Well, that's the kind of letter I wish I could write, and can't. In the first place, if there were a million dollars I could have if I could get across the continent, I'd have to borrow money for the trip or give up the million. In the second place, though Rebecca is so much better, I'd not feel justified in leaving her alone for a long job somewhere else. In the third place, my own health would not permit such a strenuous life as would be required if one were to undertake any real job of putting on a program of relief. And so on, to fortiethly.

It is my own conviction, based on far too little experience in the matter, that people will respond to the call for relief if the matter is really brought before them in a vivid sort of way. I doubt if there is a church of any size in America that would not give substantially if the members could be led to realize the actual conditions abroad. Getting the truth before them is the real problem. It seems to me that the best way to reach the churches would be through the ministerial associations; but there again is the problem of getting to the ministerial associations. It needs an army of workers. And too often letters won't do. There is needed the personal representative of the cause of humanity.

I hoped that the UNRRA was going to do an adequate thing, and raise many millions of dollars for relief, carrying their campaign into every city and town and village. I might be wrong -- I am often enough -- but if I had faced the question of relief and had had my choice between LaGuardia and Hoover -- but what's the use? If FDR had had to drown or be rescued by Hoover ----

Maybe some of my methods in getting the relief appeal before folks would be subject to unfavorable criticism. But they

have at times produced results beyond what most folks thought possible.

When we undertook to raise some money for the relief of the famine sufferers in India, I started my talk somewhat like this: "In the west part of town yesterday, a passing officer heard the feeble cry of a baby in a little novel. He entered, and found both the parents of the baby dead of starvation, and the baby almost gone." There was more detail, but you get the idea. Then I reminded the folks that I had not said that this happened in Newberg -- it happened in a village in India; and that that sort of thing was happening in thousands of places in India. If it were happening in Newberg, we'd do something about it; but such suffering among our neighbors on the other side of the earth was just as bad as if it were in Newberg, and we ought to do something about it. And so we did, getting money from some folks who are not in the habit of sending money half around the world.

At another time I capitalized on the fact that there are (or at least were) places in Europe where only one baby in five born recently lived to reach the age of a year. I asked to see all the babies in the church that morning that were less than a year old. There were ten of them. I reminded them that the conditions in some of the places for which we were raising relief were so terrible that eight of those ten babies would die before they had lived a year. I think that contributed to the generosity of the offering that day.

Wish I could tell you more about the success (or lack of success) of the Community Chest campaign in Newberg. This was its first year, and when I last talked with the treasurer of the campaign, just before we came out here on Thursday, the solicitation was moving slowly. My section of the town was the only one where the solicitation had been completed. The leaders of the movement were not too much encouraged. But the Community Chest budgets were oversubscribed in Portland and Salem, the two largest cities in Oregon. I hope to hear more about the Newberg campaign soon, and will let you know how it goes.

The Methodist church was the second in Newberg to put on the campaign for this European relief. They raise about \$500.00, their pastor informed me. The Christian Church was to put in its solicitation day before yesterday. I have not heard how it came out. These two, with the Friends church, are the three largest churches in Newberg.

With the hope that your efforts to raise relief succeeds beyond your hopes, and with best wishes to you personally, I am

Sincerely your friend,

Levi L. Pennington.