

Levi Pennington

People

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## Levi Pennington Writing to Homer Morris, March 23, 1947

Levi T. Pennington

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March 23, 1947.

Dear Friend:--

After that long meeting to discuss the organization of an AFSC branch, I wrote to Adena Joy, convener of the preliminary committee chosen when Ray Newton was here, and she called the committee together last Friday afternoon, to hear the result of our conferences with you and Clarence Pickett and the later conference with you.

As I had expected, this committee was most cooperative, and welcomed the prospects of the organization of a branch of the AFSC to do a larger work than had been their chief interest, the work of peace education.

There was only one question in the minds of the group, and that was whether they had best not simply disband, evaporate, disappear -- what you will -- leaving everything open for the establishing of a branch in Oregon, with that organization then to choose its representatives on the peace section, the relief section, and any other lines of work that were later decided upon, or whether they should continue as a promotion committee until they were sure that the branch was to be established, and then disband. Until there was certainty that a branch was to be established, I did not like the idea of their disbanding, and I suggested, as had been done in our meeting with you, that they retain their identity as a committee, and become the peace section if and when the branch is organized.

That they decided upon was a sort of compromise. There was no effort to make a thoroughly accurate minute, but in view of the fact that a meeting of the Friends is called for Friday, the 28th., they asked Adena Joy and I, the two Friends on the committee, to convey to the gathering of Friends substantially this message: "The group who met to promote the organization of a branch of the American Friends Service Committee, Peace Section, have learned with satisfaction of the prospect of the organization of a branch of the American Friends Service Committee in Oregon. We wish to pledge our support to such a project, and hope that the organization may soon be formed. Since we were appointed to promote such an organization, if and when it is formed we shall feel that our function has been fulfilled, and we shall then be eager to cooperate in any way that is desired."

Both Adena Joy and I assured them that we should expect that most if not all of them would be appointed on the peace section if the branch is established here, they wanted the central organization to be free to name the members on the various sections without necessarily any regard to those who had been chosen as a result of the meetings while Ray Newton was here.

When it came to the matter of the meeting of Friends to be held next Friday night, Adena Joy was as surprised, not to say shocked, as I had been when I learned that this branch of the American Friends Service Committee, if and when formed, must be composed entirely of Friends, though we can use non-Friends on the various sections. Indeed she found it very hard to accept the statement that the central organization must be

of Friends only. But she finally did accept it, and so the invitations to that meeting are to go to Friends only.

I am sorry that President Gulley did not get the notices out for that meeting in time for pastors who desired to do so could make announcement in their meetings, at the services today, the last chance they will have except at the mid-week prayer meetings. The announcement was made at our meeting here, but he did not mention the American Friends Service Committee, and some might not understand it. But he says he will get a notice in the papers this week, and I suppose that the AFSC will be mentioned in that notice. He plans to get out special invitations to those known to be interested.

I was surprised when he told me that the last word he had from you, you did not think it would be best for you to be here for that meeting. I hate to question your decision, but it seems to me it would be most valuable to have you here, for a number of reasons. Not to encourage Friends to plan for such a branch organization here, for I quite agree with you that it would not be wise to try such an organization unless there is deep conviction, that does not have to be fanned by outside influence, that such an organization should be formed. Not to raise money for it, for there should have been some money raised, both from Friends and non-Friends, before that meeting. But I shall be surprised if some questions do not arise on which no one of us in Oregon could give an authoritative answer -- as certainly not one of us that I know could have told that the AFSC is strictly a Quaker organization. And another thing that seems to me of much importance, you could judge of the adequacy of the interest which Friends feel by the number and quality of the folks who are at the meeting, by their attitude and spirit, by the money that has been raised, by the quality of leadership that you detect, etc., as you could not possibly judge by any correspondence. The report which anybody might give you of the Friday night meeting would be so tinged with his own attitude and his own feelings and disposition that you might not get an adequate or even an accurate idea of the matter, however honest and earnest the writer might be. If I were in your place it seems to me I'd want first hand knowledge of that meeting if it was possible to get it.

I do not know how far the financial solicitation has gone. There was quite a feeling among the non-Friends that it would be right for them to make some solicitation; and yet they felt that the matter is so nebulous that they could not do a very successful job of solicitation unless and until they knew that the branch is actually to be formed. Some of them, however, said that they would get to Adena Joy before Friday night a statement of what they could do, and some gifts from others who were interested.

Emmett Gulley has seen some of the church leaders, as he was asked to do. I do not know how far he has gone with it, but he has seen the yearly meeting clerk and the yearly meeting superintendent.

Sincerely your friend,