
Levi Pennington

People

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Pennington to Reverend Handsaker, August 15, 1947

Levi T. Pennington

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August 15, 1947.
Rev. J. J. Handsaker, Exec. Sec.,
Reifers for Relief,
512 Dekum-Building,
Third and Washington,
Portland, Oregon.

Dear Friend:--

Naturally I am wondering, as are the rest of us, what is the decision of Mr. Blickenstaff concerning the position which we offered him yesterday. I hope he takes the job, for I believe he can swing it, and we certainly need a real money getter for the work just now.

We came back from the short visit to the coast on the 3rd., rather expecting that there would be a meeting of the committee early that week, with a decision from Mr. Blickenstaff at once, and I thought that I might get to work with him, if that seemed the wise thing, by the middle of last week. Then I hoped that it might be this week at the latest. Now we don't know what to expect. I need to be back here late this month, on or before the 29th. and our monthly meeting comes September 3, and I am the presiding officer of that. There are some important gatherings of our church in Richmond during September, the ten days session of the Friends World Committee for Consultation, Indiana Yearly Meeting, and the centennial celebration of Earlham College, and I have been urged to attend all of these.

I doubt very much whether this man Blickenstaff will want me with him when he starts his job, if he does accept it. He is a different man from Wagner, much older and with much wider experience, and he knows Oregon better than I do. Maybe I am unnecessarily worrying, because there has been nothing said for a considerable time about my working with him, and I'm guessing that the whole idea has been forgotten by everybody except myself.

Did you ask me for some notes on what Gilbert Bowles said, or did I dream it? Anyhow, here are some of the things. He is a man who knows Japan as few Americans do. He went there in 1901, married a woman who had already been there five years, they were there till 1941, more than 40 years, and since Pearl Harbor he has been in Hawaii working with Japanese until early this year, when he went back to Japan for a six months visit, traveling extensively, meeting old friends and making new ones, and because of his familiarity with the people getting a better insight into the real feelings of the people than most folks would have a chance for.

In his address at the Y.M.C.A. luncheon he dwelt on four W's, Want, Weariness, Waiting and Will.

Under Want, he spoke of their need of practically everything, food, clothing, shelter, household necessities such as soap, utensils, fuel, etc., books, periodicals, etc., etc. He spoke in special approval of the sending of goats to supply the

desperate need for food, especially for children.

Under Weariness he spoke of the exhaustion that has resulted from the strenuous exertions of the war under circumstances of food shortage and lack of other necessities, the exhaustion that comes from the perils and the uncertainty of the long years during and since the war, the strain of danger from bombs, fire, famine, etc., and the strain of fear of what would result if Japan should lose the war and their country should be overrun by an enemy of whose fierceness they had been amply instructed.

Under Waiting he spoke of the uncertainty of Japan's present situation under occupation, with no treaty of peace signed, no knowledge of what is to be exacted in the way of reparations, no knowledge of what place Japan is to be allowed to have in the world of nations. All are watchfully waiting to see what the future may hold for the Japanese people.

Under Will, he declared that there is a good deal of hopefulness among the people, in spite of the terrible conditions that are being faced. They are not "lying down on the job", but are trying earnestly to "come back" as rapidly as is possible.

One thing he emphasized was the lack of the bitterness which he feared that he might find in evidence everywhere. He did not deny that there may be some in the background of the minds of some of the people, but he did not discover evidences of it, though he got very near to folks both high and low. The mass of the people were not in favor of the war, with all that it meant to every inhabitant of the islands, and the war lords were never high in the love of the people. Some of them are more hopeful now than they were before the war.

He discussed infant mortality, referring to the Government White Paper which revealed the fact that in the grades in school from the third to the sixth, measurements show that height and weight are a year below normal, with consequent lack of vigor and ability to withstand disease. The infant mortality rate is very high everywhere.

He told interesting incidents of his experience in this visit to Japan, mentioning the names of Father Rhoads and other workers over there, including Nicholson who is going with the next shipment of goats. And I was especially interested in his account of LARA, which I learned was Licensed Agencies for Relief of Asia, though its work is now almost entirely confined to Japan. He told of the 13 bodies united in Church World Service, including the American Friends Service Committee, the Brethren Relief agencies, Christian Science, Girl Scouts, the Catholic agencies and the two labor organizations, all of whose aid is handled by LARA. All forms of relief are turned over to the Ministry on Health and Welfare, and is administered then by LARA. He also told us that CARE is to be extended to Japan, though its operation is not yet started. He told of the great increase in tuberculosis, but the decrease in the number being treated in the hospitals because of the scarcity of food for these institutions. "Many families are being rebuilt by the relief sent from this country", he said, "but there are millions in need who are getting nothing."

He warned us not to be discouraged if there was no per-

sonal reply when a gift of food or other help is sent. Often such help goes to a family not one of whom can read or write English. He suggested the sending of a reply card that can be readily filled in and mailed; and I believe he said that these can be secured at the postoffice when a package is sent by mail, though I have not checked at the postoffice to find if I understood correctly.

Again he expressed his certainty that the sending of goats to Japan was just the proper thing. A goat can live almost anywhere, subsisting where a cow would starve to death.

Speaking again of the freedom from bitterness on the part of the Japanese, he said that this bitterness might develop if conditions become unbearable. They are virtually our prisoners, compelled to surrender because of military and economic blockade, as General MacArthur's men had to do, as he explains; we must treat this prisoner nation better than some of our prisoners in Japan and the Philippines were treated. We must, as Kagawa is trying to do, apply our Christianity to life.

Gilbert Bowles had more time when he spoke to the folks at our home Saturday evening. He said substantially what he said at the Y.M.C.A. there, but enlarged considerably on some of it.

Rebecca and I both want to get out to the coast again this month if possible, and unless I hear from you with some definite demands on my time, I think we shall be going early next week. My mail will be forwarded, and anything you may want to say in writing will reach me not more than 24 hours after I'd have got it at home.

Sincerely your friend,

Levi T. Pennington.