

Levi Pennington

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Pennington to the American Friends Service Committee, January 12, 1948

Levi T. Pennington

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January 12, 1948.

American Friends Service Committee,
20 South Twelfth St.,
Philadelphia 7, Penn.

Attention:
William K. Russell.

Dear Friend:--

Your letter of the 8th. is just received, with its information concerning the relation of the American Friends Service Committee to American Overseas Aid, and your suggestion that I serve in some way as community leader for this campaign.

I want to do all that I can for the help of these unfortunate peoples across the seas; and I want this community to do what it can, but I doubt very seriously whether I am the man who ought to take the leadership here. I'm afraid I've worn out my opportunities along that line.

When my wife and I came back late in the winter of 1946, we started with our local Friends Service Committee, ^{of which she is chairman,} and worked up to a community-wide campaign for funds. There had been so many house-to-house solicitations, for Red Cross, Boy Scouts, Anti-Tuberculosis, Anti-Cancer and what not, that they had decided to have a community chest, and make all extensive solicitations end except that one. It did not seem wise to break over the promise that had been made that there would be no more house-to-house solicitation, and so we made our campaign through the churches and other organizations. We had no way of knowing just how much the town gave, for some churches gave through their own channels, and did not report their totals. But we did not fall far if at all below our goal of \$2,000 ~~for~~ for every man, woman and child in town. Put that across for Philadelphia and New York, and you'll be well on your way toward your \$60,000,000.

We were still receiving help in a financial way when we were told by the man who had been selected to head the UNRRA campaign here that that organization was going to make a nationwide drive, and we got out of the way to "let somebody run that can run", disbanded our committee and waited for the big push by UNRRA. And after plenty of time had passed, we learned from this man who was to have been the leader that nothing was going to be done here by that organization.

Then I put the matter of further relief efforts up to the Ministerial Association, and they appointed a committee, which I was asked to head, as I had headed the other, for a campaign among the churches. That was in the fall of 1946, and I think we raised about half as much, maybe two thirds as much, as had been raised in the spring. I believe our own church gave about \$3,000.00 to all forms of relief in the spring, and about half that in the fall.

Then came the Heifers-for-Relief campaign. I was made first vice-president of the state organization (first in Vice our executive secretary calls me); I took the lead in the organization of the county, the first county organized in the state and the first one to send a carload of heifers; and I spent weeks

in that work. We did not know too much about it, and we could do it better another time, but it would have to be done on something like the same order. We had to travel all over this and some other counties to find the heifers, for dairy herds were cut down and many of them closed out entirely during the war when it was not possible to get men to work the dairies when a common laborer could make two or three times as much as a college president. After we had located the heifers, we have had to make a second trip with an expert dairy man to know what we should pay for them -- in some cases we refused very nice heifers for which too much money was asked, and in at least one case we paid the man a bit more than he asked. Then the whole round had to be made again with a United States veterinarian to test these heifers. Then another round to see if they passed the tests. Then one more to collect them. Then came the preparation of the car, the loading, the securing of a man to accompany the cattle, and with those few things they were off. And by that time I felt a bit off myself.

The Pacific Northwest did not get all that it wanted to give aboard the Friendship Train, and so we started agitating for a Christmas Ship, to go with 10,000 tons of food and clothing from the four states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana. The governors of these four states took it up, and working through the mayors carried the organization down through every town, supposedly. It was not started in time to get it done by Christmas, and some of the mayors did not appoint their committees in time to get a thorough job done by the deadline, which was once Saturday of last week, though it may have been extended. Newberg is undertaking to send 500 cases of canned prunes, which is not half what ought to be done, but all that the committee would undertake. I do not know how near they have come to that goal -- if they have not reached it before this I'm ashamed. The children in the schools provided more than a quarter of it within a very few days. I've tried to help as I was able in this Christmas Ship project, attending I don't know how many meetings and boosting the project wherever I could.

But the thing that has taken more ^{of my} time than any other one thing of late is the collecting, packing and shipping of clothing for relief. Just before Christmas, just two days before as a matter of fact -- no, it was three days before -- my wife and I finished packing and shipped to the warehouse in Seattle 1421 pounds; a few days later we got off something over 300 pounds; and right now my car is full, trunk and back and front, with another supply, with our front hall stacked up with cartons and packages which we must get packed up and on the way tomorrow if at all possible. The big box that we have in one of the best stores down town fills up every few days, and my wife and I do all the packing and shipping.

Well, I hope you undertook to read this on one of your days off, if you ever have one. I did not intend to write so much, but I wanted you to understand the situation. I have had the lead in Newberg of three definite campaigns for money for relief in less than two years, in addition to the never-ending push for clothing. And it seems to me that under the circumstances someone else would be better to take the leadership of the next drive, even if he were not so good. I'd be willing to

help in any way I could, and might be more useful as a deck-hand than as the captain.

And anyhow, if the American Friends Service Committee is going into this, why is not Emmett W. Gulley the logical man to take the leadership here? He is devoting himself almost exclusively to the work of relief, getting money right and left. He stands high in this town, where he was once the leading athlete at the college, later president of the college after a long term as a member of the faculty, he has been secretary of the Rotary Club, is known to everybody in town, and it seems to me would carry a lot of prestige if he were the leader locally in this American Overseas Aid. Folks in this part of the earth have more confidence in the American Friends Service Committee than in any other organization, and for Gulley to be the leader in this united campaign would carry that confidence as another man could not who is not in the active, full-time work of the AFSC.

I suspect I am assuming too much, and that all that is wanted of me is that I should be a member of a local committee which Emmett Gulley or somebody else will head. I could serve on the committee; but I don't see how I could head the organization that should be formed locally.

The advantages of a great united sampaigh are many and easily seen, the big ones being the avoidance of overlapping and overlooking and the enthusiasm that ~~often~~ comes (sometimes) with a big movement. The disadvantages are equally apparent, the most important of which, as it seems to me, are the almost certain failure to cultivate limited fields as well as could be done by the smaller organization, and the failure of many to give as generously to a great central organization where they know nothing about how large portions of the money is spent as they would give to their own denominational organization, for instance. I am sure that I could get more money from Friends to be used by the AFSC than I could for AOA -- though that may be like what Mark Twain or somebody said about the English. "There is no doubt" he said, "that the English know more than the Americans do. The only trouble is that they know so many things that aren't true." Maybe Friends would give more money for AOA -- but I'd have to be shown. Still if the big organization can get more in toto, even if the AFSC has a bit less, it ought to be worth while -- and anyway, there is an advantage aside from the financial in all working together.

I wish I might know what organizations are working in this united campaign. And please spell them out. You who are so familiar with the alphabetical abbreviations of the COS -- no, the CSO of PYM and the CPA of the CIO and all the rest, might be a bit confused if I told you that PC and PU were again facing a proposal from WG for a union with L&C and possibly CCS, with GAC favorable, as EWG was not.

With the hope that this new move may mean a vast deal more relief for the suffering peoples overseas, I am

Sincerely your friend,