

Levi Pennington

People

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## Pennington to Carl Byrd, April 27, 1948

Levi T. Pennington

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April 27, 1948.

Carl D. Byrd, Minister,  
205 East Third Street,  
Newberg, Oregon.

Dear Friend:--

The letter you handed me from Margarete Elts has been read with interest, and I am returning it herewith, though perhaps you wanted me to do something about it.

I've had to be hard-hearted about such letters, though it wrings my heart to do it. But there are two considerations that make me feel that I cannot personally respond to calls of this sort from unknown persons.

The first is the conviction, amounting to certainty so far as I am concerned, that it is a very uneconomical way to send aid. The American Friends Service Committee says that it is only one third as effective to give individually in this way as to send the money to the AFSC for distribution. Sending individual packages means that the food costs much more per unit, transportation charges are much higher, and other expenses are much greater than where food is bought in wholesale quantities and at bottom prices, in the places where this food can be secured to best advantage and with minimum cost of transportation. Why buy chocolate here, for instance, and ship it clear across the continent and then across the ocean, when it could as well be bought in Switzerland and shipped only across an international border? (I don't guarantee that they have any animals or fields or trees or factories in Switzerland that produce chocolate, but the nature of the illustration is not impaired.)

My second reason for refusing to respond to these personal appeals is the fact that it is not the way to insure the delivery of the food or other relief to those who most need it. The latest communication from CARE contains the following:

CARE WARNS AGAINST RACKET IN GERMANY. Paul Comly French, Executive Director for CARE, warns against a "racket" operating in Germany making it possible for people to solicit help in this country. The man who operates it claims to run a "foreign delivery service", and for a fee will send his clients "guaranteed genuine addresses of ten well-to-do citizens of foreign countries" chiefly in the United States, "along with a form letter for solicitation of care packages."

I had previously had correspondence on the same subject with the American Friends Service Committee, and they told me of their own attitude, suggested in this letter, that they could not respond to individual appeals from unknown persons. They find that clever and in some cases unscrupulous persons get the names and addresses of prominent and well-to-do people in this country, and then write to many of them, getting help out of all proportion to their need as compared with the needs of others right around them. In one case the AFSC made an investigation of all the people in a certain city who were known

to have written such letters, and they found that in 90% of the cases the writers of these letters were better off than their neighbors, and not among the most needy in the city.

I know an attitude of refusal to respond to such individual appeals seems terribly hard-boiled. This letter you received bears every evidence of sincerity and need and worthiness, and for a guess is just what it seems to be. On the other hand, one who was a clever enough crook would seek to make the letter seem just what this one seems to be; and a contribution sent to this address might be relief for a very needy group of folks (when the same amount sent to the AFSC could give the same amount of relief to three times that many), or it might be a gift to the most fortunate and the least needy person in that town -- it might even make its way to the black market.

In cases where I have received such letters, I have replied as tactfully as my left-handedness would admit, not accusing the writer of crookedness, but pointing out the fact that I cannot be sure, for there are crooks using this racket, and and the further fact that my gift given through the AFSC or other such organization would go farther and feed more people than if invested in individual gift packages.

Sincerely your friend,

Levi T. Pennington.