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Nineteen Points

CONFIDENTIAL -- NOT FOR GENERAL CIRCULATION

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

Minutes

Foreign Service Executive Committee

Held November 17, 1948

Philadelphia, Pa.

PRESENT: James G. Vail, presiding; Thelma How, Mary M. Rogers, Emma Cadbury, William Maier. Staff: Colin Bell, Anthony Meager, Spencer Coxe, Lili Koehler, Ruth Perry, Margaret Jones, Nancy Scott, Julia E. Branson, Elizabeth Jensen, Rupert Stanley, Obedience Perfect, Clarence Pickett, Wes Huss, Ed Peacock, Bill Ensor. Visitors: Jean Fairfax, Margaret Backhouse, Paul Sturge, Barnard Walton, William Longshore.

REGRETS: Rebecca Bradbeer.

FX-107 INVITATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS TO ADMINISTER RELIEF TO PALESTINE. After a moment of silence the discussion of the United Nations' request that the American Friends

Service Committee undertake refugee relief in Palestine was opened by the reading of Colin Bell's memo:

"The United Nations enquiry whether the Quakers would undertake a large-scale relief program in the Palestine area brings the A.F.S.C. face to face with a challenge larger and more fraught with political implications than it has yet had to face. Acceptance will strain our resources of personnel and administrative capacity to the utmost. We take the risk of failure which will be a public failure, and even if we have some success we shall certainly not satisfy everyone. We cannot avoid censure from some quarters in a scene where 'sweet reasonableness' is utterly lacking. We shall be in a world limelight, and we will have to face some compromises away from our traditional ways of working. On the other hand, refusal would be a grave decision. Success in Palestine is a vital necessity for the future of U.N. The opportunity to demonstrate the power of the non-violent approach is enormous. The political people have turned to us because they believe we have something more to offer than merely a politically neutral position. After very serious consideration, the staff suggests to the Committee that the A.F.S.C. accept the proposal of U.N. provided the following general conditions be satisfactorily established in negotiation with U.N. and/or the various authorities involved:

- "1. Our identity and autonomy must be preserved. All concerned must understand that we are not acting as an agency of U.N., but as a private agency at the invitation of U.N., and drawing upon U.N. monetary and other support. Such action does not identify us with any political decision taken by U.N. in respect of Palestine.
- "2. We understand that the U.N. Director of Relief will coordinate the total relief program throughout the several areas and will be concerned with overall allocations of money and supplies. It is essential that the U.N. Director be a person who is happy to entrust to us the direction of affairs in the field and who is sympathetic to our viewpoint.
- "3. While we realize that the invitation of U.N. has to be directed to an organization such as A.F.S.C. it should be made clear that A.F.S.C. may recruit Quakers or sympathetic non-Quakers who may not necessarily be American.

- "4. We would be prepared to administer the emergency relief program where the need seems greatest within the territorial limits of Palestine.
- "5. We would aim to organize an administration here and a force of 20 workers in the field by January 1, 1949. Future workers if available might be added later.
- "6. We would expect to operate in the field until August 1949 and thereabouts, depending upon the need and the availability of resources.
- "7. The nature of our activities would be that of emergency relief -- attempting to preserve life and health and provide shelter for those whose destitution arises from the present troubles, without any discrimination except that of human need.
- "8. We would not be prepared to undertake this minimum service of relief unless we could be assured that a solution to the vital problem of resettlement is being vigorously sought by U.N., and all others vitally concerned.
- "9. We must be assured of a specific welcome, as opposed to mere toleration, by the authorities of Israel and Arab Palestine; and of a preparedness to trust us absolutely so far as our non-political position is concerned -- and we would ask the authorities to make appropriate publicity to this effect within the two territories.
- "10. We would require the authorities of both territories to recognize the necessity of giving complete freedom of movement and communication across frontiers and within the entire Palestine area to all Quaker representatives. Without this freedom the relief program would require far more personnel than we can produce. We would guarantee the neutrality of our own representatives, who would be in possession of a Quaker passport.'
- "11. We would expect to employ or use the services of persons already in Palestine, but we would not expect the same freedom of movement or communication to be necessarily applicable to these persons as must be granted to workers sent out by us.
- "12. We would be desirous of coordinating our efforts very closely with the body operating the relief program in surrounding areas and of arriving at a flexible and harmonious working agreement with that body.
- "13. We would require to establish harmonious relations with and the active assistance of other indigenous and foreign agencies now in the field. In particular we would consider it necessary to send at once a Quaker representative to meet with relief committees at Beirut and elsewhere, insofar as those committees are concerned with relief operations in the Palestine areas.
- "14. We would not be prepared to depart from the traditional Quaker method of recruiting on a voluntary basis for our own representatives in the field, i.e. they will be maintained and if necessary granted dependency allowances but will not be paid salaries.
- "15. It is our understanding that U.N. will handle all monetary appropriations for supplies, will purchase, insure, and ship all supplies and will hand

shipping documents to us to enable us to take delivery at ports of discharge. We would require that U.N. arrange all clearances regarding freedom from import duty and removal of any barriers to movement from ports either inside or outside the Palestine area.

- "16. We would hope that authorities on both sides will allow freedom of entry and of movement of relief supplies throughout the entire Palestine area, regardless of the point of ultimate use.
- "17. Adequate transport being vital to a bulk relief program we would need assurances from U.N. and from authorities in any way connected with the Palestine areas that transport (particularly road) will be available, also fuel. We could not undertake at this time to begin the organization of a transport system. We shall not wish to use armed protection for relief supply convoys or for personnel.
- "18. We will use the accounting systems, controls, and methods of reporting which we have found effective in the past. We are unable to set up a complex administrative structure on an unfamiliar pattern. All accounts would be open to inspection at any time. Our ability to produce reports, statistics, etc., from the field will be very limited.
- "19. We require to use U.N. funds for administrative expenses both inside and outside Palestine. We wish U.N. to agree to our presenting at appropriate periods a statement of expenses incurred for reimbursement by U.N. We in turn will guarantee to hold such expenses down to a minimum consistent with efficiency. In our experience this should not exceed 10% of total cost of program."

The U.N. is searching to find the agencies that might undertake the care of refugees in Palestine and in the Arab states. It seems now probable that the League of Red Cross Societies will be asked to undertake the work in the Arab states. There is a question as to whether the International Red Cross, because of the rigidity of its charter, can be flexible enough to undertake the work in Israel and Arab Palestine and therefore the AFSC has been approached to see whether the Quakers would be willing to assume this responsibility. From telephone conversations, it is clear that Elmore Jackson in Paris has already been discussing most of the points included in Colin Bell's memo.

In the discussion which followed, a great deal of emphasis was laid on the problem of securing personnel of the calibre necessary to carry through such a program on the field and in this country. It was believed that a good many people now carrying very heavy responsibilities would be prepared to give a short period of time for a task as challenging as this one. Fear was expressed that the competition to secure personnel might endanger some of our ongoing projects. But it was hoped that in the long run the result would be the securing of additional people for these projects as well.

Another problem discussed was that of the relationship to the other private agencies already at work in the field and the importance of the U.N. assuming full responsibility for having asked the AFSC to undertake the operation was stressed. It would also be important, before any final acceptance, that the AFSC send a representative to negotiate with these agencies.

James Vail stated that he felt the weight of this request very heavily and realized that carrying it out would require, in the individuals involved, an extraordinary degree of charity.

Although the U.N. is suggesting the duration of the work as from January to August, it was realized that there was little possibility that the job would be over by August.

On being asked the opinion of the Friends Service Council on the proposition, Margaret Backhouse stated that since this was the type of undertaking that FSC could never consider for a moment, they felt hesitant in giving any opinion. She did recognize a challenge to Friends of trying to live up to what they profess. She felt that it might be possible that the FSC might participate to the extent of providing five or six people.

Finally James Vail summed up the thinking of the Committee in the following minute: The Foreign Service Executive Committee, less than a quorum being present, met to consider the request of the United Nations that we assume a large scale relief operation for refugees in Palestine. The assumption is that funds and materials would be supplied from United Nations sources. We feel heavily the weight of responsibility to try to interpret and further our concern for peace and good will in this troubled land. We have a deep sense of inadequacy, particularly with respect to providing qualified workers, but after extended discussion we are not able in clear conscience to decline to serve.

We, therefore, recommend that the Board of the American Friends Service Committee be called together promptly and that the absent members of the Foreign Service Executive Committee be informed by mail of our discussion today with the prospect of being called together very soon for further discussion of this issue.

Colin Bell, who expects to talk to Elmore Jackson in Paris later today, is counseled to say that we are not in a position to accept a firm commitment at this time but will give the invitation of the United Nations our most earnest and prayerful consideration. A memo, written by Colin Bell of conditions which would apply to a relief service to Palestine, is to be regarded as preliminary thinking in the view of those gathered today. They are the sort of conditions which would be necessary to a piece of Quaker work. The difficulty of securing adequate personnel may make it necessary for more time to elapse than United Nations has envisaged in order to prepare for such a service.

Julia E. Branson