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A M E R I C A N F R I E N D S S E R V I C E C O M M I T T E E

Minutes
Palestine Sub-Committee
Held January 6, 1950
Philadelphia, Pa.

PRESENT: Allen T. Bonnell, Chairman; Elmon Benton, Harold Evans, Ray Hartsough, Hannah Clothier Hull, Rita Morgan, Don Peretz, Richard Rhoads, James Vail. Staff: Bronson Clark, Corrinne Hardesty, Elmore Jackson, Hugh Jenkins, Cordelia Trimble. Returned worker: Marshall Sutton.

REGRETS: Wilbert Braxton, Emma Cadbury, Almy Grant.

The meeting was opened at 5:00 p.m. with a few moments of silence.

FP-1 MINUTES.

The Minutes of meetings held June 24 and September 9, 1949, were approved.

FP-2 DISCUSSION OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF RECENT ACTION BY THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY. The creation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East was discussed and it was pointed out that this new UN Agency would take over from all of the three present operating agencies on March 31, 1950. Elmore Jackson and Cordelia Trimble led the Committee in a discussion and analysis of the prospects for the refugees in the light of the creation of the new Agency. The basis of this analysis was contained in a memorandum prepared by Elmore and Cordelia and circulated to the Committee. Copy is attached to these minutes. The Committee discussed the four recommendations contained in this memorandum. It was announced that the State Department had made a request of the Service Committee for an enlargement of the Clapp suggestions with respect to Gaza, on the matter of work projects and social service projects of a morale-building nature for the refugees. Members of the Sub-Committee stressed the importance of training schools for teachers and that the social service projects should stress education and training which the refugees could take with them when they leave.

FP-3 POSSIBILITIES OF FUTURE AFSC WORK IN GAZA. Although the Service Committee is withdrawing on March 31 from the relief operation, the Sub-Committee considered again that we should remain open to ways and means of further assisting the refugees primarily in the area of social welfare activities. One of the difficulties in considering what opportunities might be open is the fact that we do not know what the relationship will be between the new Agency and the Egyptian Government, and what areas of authority they will occupy. In discussing plans for future Service Committee concern in the area, the Sub-Committee devoted this part of the discussion almost exclusively to the refugee school situation.

FP-4 POSSIBILITIES OF FUTURE AFSC DIRECTION OF REFUGEE SCHOOLS. Corinne Hardesty and Marshall Sutton stressed the importance of the school program, particularly, for three main reasons: (1) that it is not only for boys, but for girls; also, (2) that it is

education and not just propaganda, and (3) it is free and open to all classes. Each of these points represents a revolutionary concept in the area. Corrinne and Marshall explained that the schools have represented an area of Quakerly concern over and above the straight relief operation. It was also expressed that outside personnel was needed to direct the school program, in order to withstand the local pressures which are applied in an effort to revert to previous school practices.

It was decided that the Sub-Committee should request the Foreign Service Executive Committee's approval in allowing Elmore Jackson to explore with the UN and the Director of the new Agency, when appointed, what our further relationship with the schools might be after March 31. It was recommended that the exploratory discussions be based on an understanding that the schools would be supported by UN funds, or UNESCO funds, and not AFSC funds, although we might be called on for two or three personnel.

FP-5 SUGGESTED DRAFT OF A LETTER FROM
AFSC TO THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL,
REQUESTING AN OVERLAP OF NEW AGENCY
PERSONNEL WITH QUAKER PERSONNEL.

The Sub-Committee discussed at length some of the growing concern which the staff felt because the new Agency Director had not been appointed. It was pointed out that one of the main

reasons why public order has been maintained in the Gaza strip has been the routine, orderly distribution of food to the refugees. It was also pointed out that the smooth transition from AFSC to UN operation was needed to give the refugees a sense of some security.

To this end it was decided to ask the Board to send a letter to Trygve Lie, expressing our concern over the delay. It was further recommended by the Sub-Committee that we inform the UN that we are asking our Quaker workers in Gaza to interpret to the refugees the reasons for our withdrawal, well in advance of the March 31 date.

FP-6 REPORT ON ACRE SITUATION. Bronson Clark reported that with the exception of a Unit leader, the six-man team had been appointed. Some names were being actively considered for this leadership opening, and it was expected that the Personnel Department would have something to report soon.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45, at which time several of the Sub-Committee members had dinner in a nearby restaurant.


Bronson P. Clark

Attachments: Memorandum to Clarence Pickett from Elmore Jackson and Cordelia Trimble, dated December 11, 1949.

Letter to Trygve Lie from Clarence Pickett,
dated January 11, 1950.

COPY

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MEMORANDUM

December 11, 1949

TO: Clarence E. Pickett
James Read - Julia Branson
Bronson Clark
E. Raymond Wilson

FROM: Elmore Jackson
Cordelia Trimble

REGARDING: Recommendations for AFSC Palestine program growing out of discussions at the United Nations General Assembly.

From a number of discussions which we have held in the last few days it is now apparent that Gordon Clapp went out on the recent mission briefed by the Department of State that it was unlikely that any of the refugees should, in the end, return to Israel, and that it was unlikely that commitments could be secured, at this time, for them to be resettled in the Arab states.

The situation on the field confirmed these two tentative suppositions, with which the mission began its work. The emphasis is therefore put on programs which pave the way for eventual absorption of the refugees in the Arab states but which do not fully commit these states to such a move. The Report is almost totally inadequate for the Gaza strip. This reflects the small amount of time the Mission spent there -- as well as the political conclusions indicated above.

The resolution passed by the General Assembly on December 8th is an improvement over the Clapp Report at the following points:

1. It includes a provision for repatriation of the refugees and for compensation. Egypt took the lead in proposing this. The U.S. and Israel both finally voted for it.
2. It provides for the free assignment of funds as between relief and work projects.
3. The reduction of numbers of refugees served by April 1st is not mandatory, but is left to negotiation. Dillon Meyer estimates that the correct number is about 850,000.

From the point of view of our responsibilities in Gaza, it would have been gratifying if the Conciliation Commission had been able to report some progress on a long-term settlement of the refugee problem. We believe, however, that the key to the overall settlement rests in the measures that can be taken to settle the problem of the Gaza strip. This is the group of refugees most likely to gain repatriation. We would recommend that the AFSC, in the next three months, undertake the following, in an effort to have a maximum influence toward a permanent solution of the refugee problem:

1. Have a series of quiet talks with the Egyptian and Israeli representatives, first in the United States and then in the field, about the special circumstances in Gaza and the need

for a genuine solution. Our discussions here at Lake Success with the Egyptian Ambassador and with Mr. Eban have opened the way for this.

2. In cooperation with the staff in the field, draw up a plan which provides for a maximum of self-help projects on which U.N. funds might be used. I believe Dillon Meyer might help informally on this.
3. Find personnel which would enable us, increasingly, to gain the confidence of Israel that we had a substantial contribution to make to the resettlement and integration of Arabs into Israeli life.
4. Encourage certain members of our Gaza staff, who are free to do so, to remain on with the new United Nations administration. The letter which the AFSC will receive soon from the Secretary-General will call attention to the usefulness of this from U.N.'s point of view.

We should also give Raymond Wilson such facts and background material as he needs in preparation for the Congressional discussions. Getting this appropriation through Congress will not be easy, and Raymond will need an opportunity to get thoroughly briefed.

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A M E R I C A N F R I E N D S S E R V I C E C O M M I T T E E

Memorandum to: Foreign Service Executive Committee
Palestine Sub-Committee

From: Bronson Clark, Palestine Desk

You have been notified that there is to be a joint meeting of the Palestine Sub-Committee and the Foreign Service Executive Committee on Monday, February 13, at 3:00 p.m. in Room "A" in the Meeting House, to consider the request telegraphed to us by Trygve Lie, asking that the Service Committee extend its administration of the refugee program in the Gaza area for an additional thirty days, until May 1. The text of the cable is attached.

As background information for this meeting, I should like to quote excerpts from letters from Julia Branson, Don Stevenson, and Paul Johnson. Charles Read was also in on the discussions at Beirut.

During Julia's visit in the middle of January to the Gaza unit she and the unit considered what should be done in the event that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency should not come into effective operation at the time of our withdrawal. In a letter dated January 16 Julia proposed a "holding operation for the U.N." which would involve approximately 15 of our people and approximately three U.N. people, and a great deal more reliance on the Palestinian employees. Her letter proposed that we consider it an AFSC job, but that the team actually would be receiving salaries from the U.N.

In a letter of the same date Paul Johnson, our Field Director, said:

"We think it is important to have no general appeal to team members to remain after March 31 because if the plan Julia proposes is carried out it will be by a small squad picked for the emergency and with the understanding both among us and with the U.N. that it is not quite a typical Service Committee operation. It would rather be a holding operation, rather informally organized for a brief period. We solicit your early comment and suggestion."

In a further letter dated January 19, Paul Johnson said:

"On one basic point we are absolutely clear. We forcefully and vigorously feel that the AFSC must not renew its responsibility for the present type of operation after March 31. We feel that we can take this viewpoint vigorously at this time because we are approaching the working out of a practical alternative which perhaps we did not have at the time of previous renewals of responsibility."

On January 22 a complete meeting of our unit in Gaza was held with Julia, and during the discussion a concept of an alternative to our continuance was evolved which was a bit different than the idea of the "holding operation" referred to above.

"There was complete unanimity that the AFSC should get out at the end of March but recognition that the job had to go on

"and so they suggested that the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees should be told that there were a number of people prepared to stay on briefly to do the job if paid by the U.N. They would be approximately the staff about which Paul and I wrote you. I think that that is a much better suggestion than the one contained in my letter and I hope that that is the line we take if confronted with the problem, which I certainly hope will not be the case."

The idea has now developed in the field that it should not be a holding operation, but that our skeleton staff should be clearly a U.N. responsibility and a U.N. operation.

Julia left Gaza and went to Beirut, where she discussed the whole situation with Don Stevenson and Charles Read. On January 30 she wrote as follows:

"We are sending you a cable tomorrow on the subject of our continuing in Gaza after March 31. Parminter and Keen showed us this morning the cable they had sent to New York. Although they take the position that there would be no way for the U.N. to hire our staff and take over April 1 unless the new agency had been set up, we still think that it may be possible and that we should insist on it. If Keen's pessimism is justified I am very much afraid of our being caught holding the bag when the thing blows up. Certainly nothing has happened that we know of here to give us much faith that the new agency is going to come into being and be able to carry on. In any event we cannot be put into the position of trying to recruit staff again and I think that we must be very insistent that we are getting out."

On February 2 Don Stevenson enlarged upon this point of view, as follows:

"Parminter and Keen are of the opinion that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency could not possibly be in a position to take over from the agencies by April 1. Keen thought that even if a Director is appointed within a month, it will take several months after April 1 for his program to get under way. Parminter indicated that the two Red Crosses would probably agree to continue.

"All this left us quite cold, needless to say. We asked why the U.N. could not take over the Gaza program on an interim basis. The reply was that until the new Director made agreements with the separate governments, he could not be empowered so to do. The U.N. could pay our people on an interim basis but AFSC should continue to administer. There is the possibility that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency would turn the funds over directly to the respective governments and have no part in the administration.

"Afterwards, we came home and composed a cable which went to you as follows, after being discussed with Paul Johnson over the radio:

'C-7 Re proposals through UN for AFSC continuance Gaza program after March 31 we and Gaza believe unwise consent to this now stop believe UN can work out arrangement to take over enough Quaker personnel prepared for long term employment to man program on interim basis as UN staff after April 1 stop consider it bad psychology agree continuance again stop other agencies will probably agree continue stop possibility Branson can attend Geneva meeting stop cable your instructions to Colin Bell.'

"The recommendations in this cable were based on the belief that:

1. on a streamlined basis the Gaza program becomes less and less an AFSC program so that AFSC should definitely withdraw after April 1.
2. if we do not insist on a definite date, the postponements may have no end.
3. frankly, we do not want to be there when the blow-up occurs.
4. we are quite sure that a way can be found administratively for the UN to take over the whole enterprise, at least on a month to month basis or, say, a short-term contract for our personnel who would go on the U.N. payroll.

"This is the situation which exists now. I very much hope that the AFSC Board will insist on withdrawing April 1. I believe it will be a mistake to continue at Gaza after that date. By putting our foot down we can bring pressure on the U.N. to get busy and go to work on its responsibilities. I am quite sure that Lake Success believes the Quakers will give in again, particularly if the other agencies agree to continue."

After leaving the Middle East Julia, en route to Paris and Geneva, stopped at Athens, and writing further about the meeting with Keen and Parminter on February 2 said the following:

"Since no organization could be created at this late date to take over April 1 they see no other course than to ask the agencies to carry on. We countered with our plan of having staff taken over by U.N. Although they say there is no question but what the money would be made available to pay them, they do not believe the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees would take over the administration. None of us was convinced that was true. Nothing that we can see from this side of the ocean indicates that there is going to be any better time to get out than April 1."

As stated above, the primary purpose of this memo is to present a summary of the field viewpoint, and no doubt the viewpoint of the staff here in Philadelphia will be explained at the meeting.

There has been, however, one significant development which might have some effect on our decision. On February 7 we received the following cable from Paul Johnson:

"C-7 Seventytwo hours heaviest rains temperature about freezing one inch snow continuous winds to sixty mph stop possible one thousand tents destroyed no replacements available many thousands shelterless stop using all available school and mosque tents stop resulting distress and disorder viewed with alarm by government stop worst weather fifty years stop no improvement in sight stop can you Jackson Wilson get Congressional and Lake Success attention for speedier more adequate attention and finance."

Upon receipt of this cable we immediately contacted the U.N. and they telephoned Parminster at Geneva, giving him authority for the expenditure of funds and supplies for this emergency. Undoubtedly the supplies will take the form of more tents, and blankets, perhaps. Even so, it is quite clear that the Gaza staff is at present laboring through a very difficult situation, and that the refugees themselves are in an impossible position. It points up again clearly that the only solution for the Gaza refugees is their movement out of this strip and settlement elsewhere.

February 9, 1950