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VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

Veterans of Foreign  
Wars



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Mr. Joseph M. Stack  
Commander-in-Chief  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
1026 - 17th Street, N. W.  
Washington, D. C.

30 AUG 1948

Dear Commander Stack:

In Mr. LaGuardia's absence overseas, I am replying to your recent letter on UNRRA's purchases of building materials.

As you are undoubtedly aware, Mr. LaGuardia has consistently supported the interests of veterans and actively worked to speed America's building and housing program. We are therefore particularly sorry that Mr. LaGuardia himself is unable to reply to you. He will not see your letter before his return to this country next month.

It is, however, important that the facts underlying the cement block situation which you specifically cite, be brought to your attention, particularly because the implied criticism of UNRRA is so completely without foundation. We regret that you did not investigate the matter more fully before releasing a statement to the press. Had you done so, we question whether you would have ever issued the release.

Here in brief are the facts: UNRRA has indeed procured 14 cement block machines for shipment to the Ukraine. Three of them were already on the high seas last week. The other 11 are awaiting shipment. The purchases were made by UNRRA early this year, after the most careful screening by the Department of State, UNRRA's claimant agency, and Treasury Procurement, which does the actual purchasing of all materials for UNRRA in this country. The requisition was initiated in November, 1945, long before cement block machines were regarded as critically short.

As a matter of fact, the Civilian Production Administration only placed cement block machines on the so-called positive list of top priority building materials in short supply on August 15th. This list is maintained by the Office of International Trade of the U. S. Department of Commerce. By that time, the three machines were already en route, and UNRRA's procurement a thing of the distant past. Before export licenses for the additional machines or for any other high priority building materials can be granted, the OIT clears with the State Department, the CPA and the National Housing Agency.

Even now, however, the Review and Analysis Branch of CPA does not consider cement block a critical shortage, and all expert opinion concurs that the cement block machines in this country are not operating at full capacity.

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The 14 machines purchased by UNRRA represent about 1% of the capacity production of the entire U. S. cement block machine industry for a six-month period, or something like one week's work.

You also quote a press release from the Civilian Production Administration, which carries the unwarranted implication that UNRRA has failed to comply with the CPA "request". Since CPA exercises a virtual export veto on scarce building materials, you can readily see that the release you cite is in the nature of a policy statement rather than a polite request with which UNRRA may or may not comply.

Since NHA and CPA have been charged by the U. S. Government with the task of expediting the housing program, and since careful vigilance over the disposition of scarce materials is an integral part of that program, may we suggest that you communicate your desire to review with them the programming of building materials for use either here or abroad.

As for UNRRA's policy on building materials generally, it is necessarily subordinate to America's building program. Beyond that, UNRRA has a clear mandate from its Council, consisting of representatives of 48 member nations, including the U. S. A., to carry out a relief and rehabilitation program in war-invaded, devastated countries. Among these are the two Russian republics, which suffered some of the war's worst destruction. It is the duty of UNRRA to procure what is needed to the extent the supplying countries can make it available; it is for the Government of the supplying countries to determine what can be made available.

In the light of these facts, you will readily appreciate our feeling that UNRRA has been subjected to some undeserved adverse publicity by your organization. I trust that you will convey the facts to your members.

Sincerely yours,

Lowell W. Rooks  
Acting Director General

SBrooks:DFI:hsd  
29 August 1946





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VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS  
OF THE UNITED STATES  
FOUNDED 1899



JOSEPH M. STACK  
COMMANDER IN CHIEF  
150 WILLIAM PENN. HOTEL  
PITTSBURGH 30, PENNSYLVANIA

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS  
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

Reply to:  
1026 17th Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C.

August 19, 1946

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Fiorello H. LaGuardia  
Director General  
United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration  
1344 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Comrade LaGuardia:

As you know the Veterans of Foreign Wars has been actively engaged in a campaign to expedite the national emergency housing program in the interest of returning veterans.

It has come to our attention that the organization which you head, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, has been actively engaged in acquiring cement block machines and other items needed in our own housing program.

We specifically refer to cement block machines, produced by the Besser Manufacturing company, Adrian, Michigan, which are reportedly enroute to Russia.

Knowing your long background and interest in American housing and after reading your views relative to the many problems involved in veterans' housing, the Veterans of Foreign Wars believes any policies of UNRRA detrimental to the national housing emergency may have been formulated without your consent or knowledge.

We are in receipt of a press release from the Civilian Production Administration, saying that "whenever it (CPA) finds that UNRRA exports of machinery and equipment would seriously affect veterans' housing, UNRRA is immediately requested to postpone procurement of those articles until domestic needs are met."

August 19, 1946

Continuing the press release, CPA said, "This is in line with an agreement between CPA and the Department of Commerce to place practically all types of building materials, machinery and equipment under strict export control. . . . CPA emphasized that, in view of the recognized urgency of re-housing victims of the war, it has no intention of requesting elimination from UNRRA program items which do not genuinely interfere with the U. S. housing program, but that wherever interference with domestic housing is clearly demonstrated, CPA believes that UNRRA procurement must either be delayed or cancelled."

The Veterans of Foreign Wars would appreciate your policies and views on the above mentioned matters. We would like to have the opportunity to clear with you all or any shipments of vitally needed housing materials and equipment to any foreign nation under the UNRRA program.

Sincerely yours,

*Joseph M. Stack*  
JOSEPH M. STACK  
Commander-in-Chief

JMS:jh