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To: Arthur W. Packard

Date: 2/28/49

From: L. S. R.

Comment:

Subject: Amer. Civic Committee
of Mass Education Movement

FEB 28 1949

HPF
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Principal has seen.

☒ Principal has not seen.

Referred for:

Comment and Suggestion.

Suggested Reply.

Necessary Action.

☒ Information.

AMERICAN-CHINESE COMMITTEE
OF THE
MASS EDUCATION MOVEMENT, INC.

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NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

CIRCLE 5-4100



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February 23, 1949

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Executive Secretary

I have just received a long, and I think, interesting letter from Dr. Yen which I want to share with each one of you. I think it is remarkable that in these days of turmoil, trouble and confusion, Dr. Yen can be so sane, and on the whole so optimistic, notwithstanding all the difficulties in regard to the outcome, especially of the great constructive work which he has been doing for so many years.

This letter is not an appeal for funds, as we have enough for the immediate present, and especially if we are able finally to release some of the money that has been earmarked by Congress for the Economic Cooperative Administration for China, which is under the direction of Roger Lapham, who is over in China at present.

If you have any questions or suggestions that we should transmit to Dr. Yen I will be glad to receive them.

Thanking you for your interest and support in the past,

Very sincerely yours,

Gerard Swope

Gerard Swope

CHINESE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE MASS EDUCATION MOVEMENT

HSIEH-MA-CHANG, PA-HSIEN

SZETCHUAN, CHINA

February 2, 1949

Mr. Gerard Swope, Sr.
General Electric Company
570 Lexington Avenue
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Swope:

I am awfully sorry that I haven't been able to write you as often as I want to. This is partly due to my constant travel and partly due to the terrible uncertainty of the whole China situation. In the meantime the Rural Reconstruction Commission has been handicapped in a number of ways and has been unable to make much progress. There are good reasons for one to be pessimistic, but there are equally good reasons for being hopeful. I will write briefly in the following:

I. The Commission's Program

There are four main aspects regarding the program of the Commission, namely, agricultural production, social education, encouragement of local initiative and integrated rural reconstruction.

1. Agricultural Production. The Commission members (two out of five being agriculturalists) felt that one of the basic needs of rural China is the increase of agricultural production, particularly food. So to date, the most outstanding project that the Commission has undertaken is irrigation. The first irrigation projects are to be in Szechuan. The Commissioner of Construction of the province is an old friend of mine. He is a very dynamic fellow and has been promoting irrigation for the last

ten years. He established a record of having irrigated more than 1,000,000 mow (166,700 acres) of land. The Commission is cooperating with him in launching eleven projects capable of irrigating about 200,000 mow (33,300 acres) of land. The other is a large scale project of repairing the dikes at the Tung-ting Lake in Hunan Province, sometimes called the "rice-bowl" of China. This project, when completed, will be capable of increasing a total of 6,000,000 piculs (1 picul = 133.333 pounds) of rice, which is almost two-thirds of the total amount of rice imported from abroad each year. A third project along this line is being contemplated for the province of Kwangtung. Before T. V. Soong resigned, he was talking with us about launching an irrigation project covering some 4,000,000 mow (666,700 acres) of land. If this is done Kwangtung will not need to import any rice from foreign countries. This project may be greatly delayed because of Soong's resignation.

Multiplication of seeds and extension for rice, wheat, corn, are also being taken up in several provinces. The same is true also of the improvement of animal stock and the treatment of animal diseases like rinderpest, hog cholera, etc.

2. Social Education. This section concerns itself with attacking illiteracy and promoting adult and youth education, but the Commission considers it of secondary importance. However, there is a great deal of interest in using radio, motion pictures and film strips as media for disseminating knowledge and information among the masses of the people. Last month L. G. Shreve, a specialist, was invited to come to China as consultant. He presented a program for audio-visual education amounting to US\$600,000, and it was approved by the Commission. I believe in due time the members will come to appreciate the pressing importance of tackling illiteracy in China.

3. Encouragement of Local Initiative. By local initiative we mean the large number of rural reconstruction projects that have been undertaken by local institutions and individuals throughout the country for the last twenty-odd years. They represent a very dynamic movement for rural reconstruction. It has been carried on by men and women who have great faith in the farmers and in their ability to build up China from the foundation. War or no war, money or no money, these splendid men and women have been carrying on their work for more than two decades without flinching. An important part of the Commission's program should be to stimulate and to revitalize this indigenous movement. American aid is after all temporary and limited. By grafting our scions onto a living tree can we best ensure that China will reap the fruit sooner and continue to reap it in the future. Unfortunately, so far, little has been done along this line. I believe, however, that the Commission as a group, appreciates the significance of this aspect of the program and will do its utmost to push it when conditions permit.

4. Integrated Rural Reconstruction. Life is organic. Piecemeal reform does little good in the long run. Through increased production the peasant may get a little more income, but that will not save him from the exploitation of his absentee landlord or the corrupt official. Literacy may give him the fundamental tool of reading and writing but that alone cannot prevent him from dying of cholera. In other words, production, education, health, land reform, and self-government are all parts of an integrated program of social and political reconstruction, all interdependent and interrelated. This is the place where the Movement has something very definite to contribute to rural reconstruction in China. I am glad to say the Commission has accepted this basic concept and is prepared to appropriate

funds for its implementation. You will readily appreciate that since this involves social and political reforms it is the most difficult phase of the whole rural reconstruction program. The one and, so far, the only sample of an integrated program is the Experimental Center of the Movement in the Third Prefecture of Szechuan Province . . . The Commission has recently voted to partially finance this program.

II. The MEM's Integrated Program in The Third Prefecture

This experimental area of ours has eleven hsien (counties) with a total population of 5,320,000, which is considerably larger than Denmark or Norway. I have mailed to Miss T'ang of the New York Office a complete set of the program presented to the Commission and have asked her to send you a summary of it, so I will not dwell on the program here. However, there are a few projects that I wish to mention in passing because I know they will be of special interest to you.

1. Producers' Cooperatives. It is on the back of the Chinese peasant that Chinese civilization has been built. But to this day the tenant farmer is scarcely better off than the serf of medieval times. He is exploited not only by his landlord but also by the officials and money lenders who charge him exorbitant rates of interest. If the farming communities are to be stabilized, and the standard of living of the farmers be improved, one of the most pressing and fundamental things we should aim to do is to help the "tiller of the land become owner of the land". The peasants who are qualified to become members of these Producers' Cooperatives are only those who are the actual tillers of the land. For the first time these poor helpless peasants are organized. These Producers' Cooperatives will be able collectively to:

- a. Guarantee to the tenant farmer that he will not be unlawfully evicted, and his use of the land will be stabilized;

- b. Act as the tenant's representative in dealing with his landlord and in handling the payments of rent and other matters in accordance with the law;
- c. Help realize the goal of Dr. Sun Yat Sen that the "tiller of the land become the owner of the land" through peaceful and democratic means;
- d. Put a stop to the creation of any new landlord in the community in which these Cooperatives are organized.

The Movement had hoped to organize 4,000 of these Producers'

Cooperatives to make an effective demonstration of what can be done to help tenant peasants/^{to independent}become/farmers free from exploitation and, whenever loans are available, become owners of land. But unfortunately, because of some serious difficulty - which I will touch upon later - that the Commission has in getting cash from the Government ninety per cent of this project has been cut. However, we will do the best we can with the limited budget.

2. Weaving Cooperatives. These cooperatives have been in operation for nearly two years. Members of the Commission made a special visit to our Experimental Area in Szechuan and they were, among other things, very much impressed with the weaving cooperatives. The budget for this project, as approved by the Commission, is capable of helping all the 23,000 native looms (each loom representing one family) of the poor peasants in Pi-shan, one of our eleven counties. The encouraging thing about this project is that in one and one-half years all of the weaver-farmers will become economically independent. That is to say, they will be able to carry on their weaving without having to make any more loans and in their own humble and simple way they will become self-sufficient. Of course, as you know, their main occupation is farming and weaving is an industry carried on by old and young in the home. It supplements the income they get from farming. When this program is done it will benefit 40 per cent of the 300,000 people of

this county. What is really most significant about these Producers' and Weaving Cooperatives is that we are developing a Chinese cooperative system for production, business management, selling and purchasing and thereby training Chinese peasants to become modern, productive and self-governing citizens.

3. Literacy and Adult Education. In this total area of 5,320,000 people there are about 2,000,000 illiterate adults and unschooled youth. We aim to establish 4,000 People's Schools and to demonstrate the methods and techniques of teaching everyone of these illiterates. Practically all the teaching is going to be done by "Tao-sheng". A "Tao-sheng" can be an illiterate farmer who has just learned to read himself, or an older pupil of a primary school, or even a member of the educated gentry. All of them volunteer their service and teach without pay. In Pi-shan alone there are more than 3,000 of these "Tao-sheng". Because of this immense voluntary help on the part of the local people themselves, it costs less than US fifty cents to make an illiterate literate. I mustn't forget to add that a school is not just a school in a community; it is a center for cooperative organization, for agricultural extension, for health clinics, as well as for citizenship training and village self-government. In fact, pupils of the People's Schools are generally members of the cooperatives. So, all the educational, economic, health, and civic activities are integrated and, most important of all, participatedⁱⁿ/by the local people themselves.

4. Local Contributions to Reconstruction. It is not only in the form of volunteer service that the local people give to the program of rural reconstruction in their communities. They also give their hard-earned money in the form of their crops. Each of the People's Representatives

Assemblies of the eleven counties, which constitute the Third Prefecture, passed a resolution that their people themselves must contribute their share to the reconstruction program of their hsien (county) if they are to be worthy of whatever American aid that may be granted to them. I am, therefore, proud and happy to tell you that to date the local people have contributed 500,000 piculs of unhulled rice, which is more than US\$1,000,000. This is something unprecedented not only in the history of the Third Prefecture but also of all Szechuan Province. I often say and I intend to keep on saying that what China needs is not relief, but release - release of the potential power and wealth of China's common people. We must move heaven and earth to release it for the good of China and of the world.

III. Political Situation and the MEM

I do not suppose it surprising to you that Chiang Kai-shek should have finally taken the difficult step of relinquishing his presidency . . . He did a wise thing by leaving the affairs of the State in the hands of his lawful successor, the vice-president, instead of one of his own party members. Li Tsung Ren, the acting president, has been an old friend of mine for many years and is a man of great integrity. He won his election as vice-president over a year ago through regular constitutional means. He is not a "strong man" in the sense that Yuan Shih Kai was or Hitler. He is a man who is interested in the plain people of China and is big enough to be humble . . . I saw him just a week ago today, a few days before he succeeded Chiang. He is one of the few important political and military figures who has actually made serious attempts at social and political reforms and knows what rural reconstruction means. You may recall that before China's war of resistance over ten years ago, Li and his colleagues invited members of the Mass Education Movement to help them set up an

integrated program of social and political reconstruction for their province, Kwangse. If Li is going to play any big role in the new government, which we have every reason to believe he will, the kind of program that our Movement has been advocating and operating in China should have a more favorable chance for wide application than during the Nationalist regime. One of the first things that Li did and is still trying to carry through is the abolishing of all the laws and regulations on thought control and regimentation, and the guaranteeing of freedom of speech, as well as setting free political prisoners, among whom are literally thousands of China's educated youth and intellectuals. He is carrying out something the whole country has been praying for . . .

Another friend of ours, who is taking a leading part in the present peace negotiations with the Communists, is Chang Chi Chung, who is a member of our Board and who, you may recall, was governor of Hunan during the war. It was with him that we cooperated in a province-wide government-reorganization program. When General Marshall was over here endeavoring to bring about a compromise between the Nationalists and the Communists, Chang was the first man who succeeded in bringing Mao Tse Tung, the Communist leader, to sit at the peace table with Chiang Kai-shek whom Mao had not seen for nearly twenty years. That may give you some idea of the prestige and confidence that he commands among even the Communist leaders. A superhuman job is ahead of the peacemakers, but we hope for the best. Our mutual friend, Chang Chun, the former premier, has recently been appointed the Military Governor of all Southwest China, of which Szechuan is the leading province. This is a splendid move and we are very happy over it. His being in Chungking will do much to help strengthen our whole program of rural reconstruction in Szechuan and we, too, may be able to do something in our own humble way to be useful to him in his administration of Southwest China.

One question I suppose our American friends would like to have answered is what would be the Communists' attitude towards the MEM program. While it is difficult to be positive about it there are certain facts that one can cite that should throw some light on the subject. When the Movement was conducting its experiment in Tingsien in North China, the Communists sent several groups to study its methods and techniques with a view to using them in their own territories. Since the occupation of Tingsien and its neighboring districts by the Communists, the reconstruction activities first initiated by the Movement were allowed to go on.

About two years ago, the Rockefeller Foundation sent a delegation of three men, including the Dean of the Harvard Medical School, and the Foundation's Director of Medicine, Dr. Allen Gregg, to study the prospects of a health program in China for the Foundation. One day I ran into Dr. Gregg and he said to me, "Yen, I have seen something which ought to make you feel happy and proud." I asked him what it was. He said, "I just came back from Kalgan (which was at the time occupied by the Communists) and there I saw an exact duplicate of your Tingsien Rural Health Program. Then, as you know, I have been invited several times by the Communist leaders to conduct our mass education and rural reconstruction program in their territories but that was out of the question under the Nationalist regime.

The MEM has been known and recognized in China through the past two decades as being nonpolitical, nonpartisan, a movement of the people, by the people and for the people. As long as our Movement is free to serve our people, and in our own way, we will carry on. But when and if freedom is denied us, then, we will as the Chinese adage has it, "Rather break as jade than to be preserved as tile."

February 2, 1949

IV. The Commission's Present Flight

You will be shocked to know that although the Commission has to its credit a total equivalent of US\$25,000,000 (two and a half million kept in U.S.) in Chinese currency, we do not have enough cash to pay for administrative expenses not to mention reconstruction projects. To date, as far as we know, the U. S. government has already paid the Chinese government approximately \$200,000,000 of the economic aid of which 10 per cent belongs to the Commission. Out of this US\$20,000,000, the Commission has not yet been paid the Chinese currency equivalent of even half a million U. S. . . .

You will be pleased to know that the Commission has agreed to grant US\$1,000,000 (half of which is to be used for loans to the Cooperatives and the other half for helping to support education, health, and agricultural projects) to the MEM program in the Third Prefecture. None of us know when we are going to get any actual money. The moment we do, I am flying back with it to set up the whole program in our Experimental Center. If the Joint Commission could actually pay the MEM the amount it approved (i.e. one million U.S.), we would be able to do a swell job in Szechuan.

Do hope and pray this will find you and Mrs. Swope in the best of health.

Affectionately,

/s/ Jim

P.S. The prospects of peace are not bright, to date. But not hopeless. The Communists are capitalizing on their gains and driving towards Nanking . . . However, there is still this vast territory of Southwest, Northwest, Central and South China (with over 200 million population) as yet untouched by the present conflict . . .