

# LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

EISENACH, 1923 - COPENHAGEN, 1929 - PARIS, 1935 - LUND, 1947 June 30  
July 6

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July 30, 1947

Dear Flatens (Gabriel, Annasorted, Evelyn-of-Mons\*Hanson's-Creek, and Architractor Arnold), Hinderlies (of Manitowoc and the Far North Shore and a few miles back), and Lowly Labourers (I am in the British Zone just now)--cook's cronies, water wenches, log loaders, rock rollers, concrete carriers, census collectors, powerful preachers, and parochiaal professors:

Half a summer has escaped since I took a few pictures of the forward half of the camp as they left Flatens' in June. By the time you get this letter you will be in what most work camps have found to be the richest part--the

final two weeks. By that time the final work drive is on; and there is the tension of the uncompleted task and the closer vision of an assignment completed. Little frictions have had their corners worn off or have been resolved in understanding and care-ful love. Group worship and private meditation have deepened. If I am wrong, you are odd--but no doubt you are an exceptional group and perhaps have been having the last two weeks of camp right from the very beginning.

As a release from a rigorously disciplined urge to be with you, I have been speaking of the camp to all those with likely-looking ears, especially to Americans in Geneva and in Germany. I may be transferring my own enthusiasm to my listeners, or they may be startled into response at the sight of lethargy becoming quite alive, but in any case there is genuine interest, sometimes surprised delight, in your work. Power to you.

The other day in Frankfurt I visited something along the lines of the St. O. S. W. C. or S.Q.S.U (N. S. C.). About ten miles from Frankfurt fifteen refugee men are making a beginning on a town of 200-300 houses, complete with school, church, railway station, etc. The project is sponsored by Das Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirken in Deutschland. Rubble from Frankfurt is mixed with straw and clay (from the excavations) and made into large blocks and bricks. These are laid up with mortar (cement is the hardest thing to get), plastered with more clay and straw, and then plastered with mortar, and finally whitewashed. The floors are of three inch concrete poured on boards between railroad or street car rails spaced about three feet. The first family was cooking its first meal in the first completed house the day Ted Bachman (Maywood Seminary, Chicago) and I were there. The meal was soup for three made of water and a 1 1/2 inch cube of ersatz suppe. Two other houses were almost completed and work on five more was progressing. They expect to have twenty ready before heavy winter sets in. The Catholics, it is said, have already completed such a village. This one, Vil Bel, vil be a protestant community, largely Lutheran. Dr. Freudenburg, now Secy. of the Ecumenical Refugee Commission, will be coming from Geneva to take over the pastorate. Germany needs so much of many things. The most effective work in all Germany is being done by the church,

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it seems to me, work of a social nature, as in Vil Bel, and of a more decisive religious nature, as in every town and city and rural parish where there is an awakened pastor and congregation (pastor Dannerbaum's congregation of the Inner Mission in Berlin and Han Lilje's work in Hannover). But they are strapped by hunger, the need of books, etc.--not least the need of fellowship, for they have been cut off from one another and from Christians throughout the world. One of the great things about the Lutheran World Federation Meeting at Lund for them was, as Dr. Asmussen, head of the chancellery of the E. K. I. D., said, "There we found the Church again."

Supposed to be the end of their wandering

Near Vil Bel is a youth camp of Hilfswerk, a permanent camp for wandering young men between 14 and 21 years of age. There were 79 that day, double the number a fortnight before. Just as we were leaving two lads about twelve came in. They were unable to stay however, because the camp is a self-ruling group and already it has been found that an entirely different type of camp is needed for younger adolescents and boys. Besides, the camp was already bursting. It seemed horrible to say no to these boys, but that is the way it is here. So much of life here is lived on the limits where there just isn't anything left. When one sees the hundreds and thousands of men, women, boys, girls, children, and babies in box cars and sleeping on rubble around railway stations and in the sickening bunkers, he realizes that the normal or rather average life of many of these people is always on the edge. But the German Church or rather the Christian Church in Germany is alive and is working. To me that is the great hope, in spite of weaknesses and deficiencies of all kinds. That is where we can fit in, at least with our support of Lutheran World Action and with letters.

Perhaps in the strenuous run of camp work and life you have not been able to make the little public relations release mentioned in the "provisional committee" meetings. If you have, no doubt Edna has forwarded something to Geneva, for as yet I have no abiding place. But I have visions of the work you must be doing, and of some of the unforeseen difficulties one must expect. I am proud to think that a St. Olaf group and a St. Olaf pastoral couple would venture into a job as you have; and unless mice and men (there was one of each in the waste basket and in the bed, respectively, in this room last night) are entirely wrong, your camp will be #1 of a number of S. O. S. S. U.'s.

And by the way, are you getting as much fish as we did in Lund--breakfast, lunch, and dinner? And how are the trout in M. H.'s Creek and in the Brule?

Greetings to all.

Howard H.