

Dear Mrs St Pierre ,

Perhaps you will be interested in the enclosed broadcast which we gave last evening over KORE. Mrs Bell wrote it and it seemed to go over well.

This may help explain matters to some , and anyway it seemed worth a try. Mr Merriam went over it beforehand, and each statement was checked carefully with the proper official so it was accurate.

Sincerely yours,

R Louise Fitch

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2075 Kincaid St
Eugene Oregon
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Mrs. BELL: Goodevening. This is Mrs. John Bell. As ^{h.}Cairman of the Block Block Leaders for our Community I have felt it appropriate and timely that the women of Eugene be told something of the importance and the duties of those taking active part in our project. I have with me in the studio Miss Louise Fitch, who is County Chairman of Womens' Activities and the four Sector leaders of Eugene: Mrs. Howard Taylor of the Northeast Section, Mrs. Willis Warren of the Southeast Section, Mrs. Donald Husband, the Southwest Section and Mrs. W. S. Love of the Northwest Section. The discussion to follow will give you, we hope a clearer picture and a better understanding of the duties of the Block Leaders and their important place in our defense program. Miss Fitch, at whose instigation and for what purpose was this organization made and how far reaching is it?

MISS FITCH - Our government has asked its organization nationally and indicated its importance for the purpose of getting information into the homes. This information deals essentially with our national rationing program.

MRS. LOVE - When you say "dealing with our rationing program" in what way do you mean?

MISS FITCH - To make it easier for our home keepers to meet the rationing program and still maintain the health and well being of those at home.

MRS. TAYLOR - Of course, we must remember that the pinch of the rationing has not been felt, to any great extent, at this time. At least in our immediate vicinity. We have been forewarned regarding each item rationed and most people, without hoarding, made a little nest egg of the food stuffs to be rationed so when point stamps are lacking to buy the meat or butter or whatever it might be, there is the little storage pot to fall back on. But that storage pot is not going to last forever and when that is gone, the question will be what to substitute for the

things we won't be able to buy until our next stamps are good. There is a group, the Nutritionists, studying that very thing and that information will be available, - In fact, ready to go into our homes to help us with this very problem. The job of our group is to get that information into those homes.

MRS. WARREN - It is also to the point, I feel, men in Civilian Defense Headquarters, knowing as they do that the Block Leaders will be made up of women with homes and children to care for, that these women will not be called on for things to do that will require them to be away from their homes at long periods of time. The work of this group can be accomplished from their own homes and via their telephones. If the women in our town will cooperate, there will be a minimum of work entailed for all. We are all deeply involved in many things, but I do feel that anything dealing with the feeding of those at home is vastly important and must be given a place of prominence in our scheme of activities.

MRS. HUSBAND - There has been so little explanation of the Block Leader given that I have found very few women who know anything about it. To most people it would appear as another heavy task demanding hours of work away from the home, time that most home makers do not have to give. But when they realize that as a Block Leader, the only people they will have to contact are these in their own block and then only at times when some new bit of information has been sent out for the consumption of the homes, I feel most women will be glad of the opportunity to take part in this very important work. We have been visiting over the back fence for years. Why not hand them that pamphlet telling them something they will find most useful to them at this time?

MRS. WARREN - There is another task assigned to us and upon which we are now working: the registration of all nurses: graduates, those who have had partial training and all practical nurses. I, for one, feel this to be very

much to the point. It will be a comforting thought in case of the need for experienced help of this kind, that there will be available the names, addresses and telephone numbers of all those who can step in, in an emergency. With so many of our regular nurses going into the service, where they are so badly needed, it is necessary that we be able to call on those who are no longer active in the profession to help out in cases of need for it. This information will be kept on file in the headquarters of our civilian Defense.

MRS. LOVE - Don't we have a nurses registry? Are we not duplicating their file?

MRS. WARREN - Yes, there is a nurses registry. But those who are registered there are those actively engaged and on call at all times. Our work is to register those people who are not and have not been nursing for some time. These women are not listed with the nurses registry.

MRS. TAYLOR - I, for one, can think right now, of any number of women who have completed their training, have married and have families and who have been inactive for several years. But who, if the emergency were to arise would be glad to help out and their services be invaluable. It is with pride that I learned that Eugene had been designated as a casualty center, in case of a disaster in the Northwest. We have the facilities, modern enough to be of use and casualties will be brought to Eugene for care. But we must know that this will require the aid and help of all trained women in case of such a disaster and it is for this that we must have on file a complete list of all those so qualified, so that they may be reached on very short notice.

Then too, there is, at a time like this, the danger of an epidemic when trained care is so necessary and so hard to get. We have been very fortunate so far, and our hope is that we will avoid any epidemics such as we had in 1918 but we must be prepared for such emergencies. A list

of all trained women would certainly be of great need and assistance in case of such a crisis. I was told of something that is very much to the point here, just the other day. During the last war, there was a very great disaster on our Eastern Seaboard. They made use, in this town, of a building that had been condemned, placing therein 92 adult patients and 72 children, who had been injured as well as those having the flu. The woman placed in charge knew how to read a thermomemter and take a pulse, she having learned that in her course in Physical Education. Her two assistants were Junior League members from an adjoining city, who acted as dieticians, knowing practically nothing about cooking in any form, let alone for people as ill and badly injured as these patients were. They had complete charge for 23 days, with the help one morning out of the 23 of an interne from some hospital who happened to be visiting near by. We hope we never have to meet such an emergency but - we don't know. And we do want to be prepared. In this registration of nurses, we also secure the information regarding their willingness to be sent into some other community in case of the need.

But this raises another very important question in my mind. How can these women leave their children, no matter how strong their urge might be to help?

MRS. HUSBAND - There will be provision made for that. So far, the Block Leaders have not been asked to take charge of this detail, although they are certainly in a position to do so, should they be asked. In this, as in so many other needs, each community has handled these groups differently meeting their own specific problems. As an example, one city is registering all girls who are willing, between the ages of 14 and 16, is giving them a course in child care and in case of the need, these girls will go into the homes, either for a consideration or as their contribution to the war effort. It will be excellent training for the girls and a very great need

will be filled when the time arises.

MRS. BELL - Mrs. Love, as a clarification of the way this group is or will be organized, will you detail to us your method of organization?

MRS. LOVE - I have divided my section of town into five smaller sub-divisions, it being a large section and spread over considerable space. In each one of these smaller sub-divisions I have appointed a captain, who in turn appoints the Block Leader in each block in her sub-division. When information for distribution is given to me by our City Chairman, I will give it to these five captains. They in turn will pass it on to the Block Leaders, who will see that it gets in to each one of the homes in her immediate block. But reports from my captains say that numerous women approached have felt that this group is not important nor will it be active enough to warrant any interest given to it.

MRS. FITCH - As to the degree of importance, who is to say which organization is the most important? There are numerous groups working in every community in our country today, each one of them dealing at home, with some particular phase of our war effort. They all have some function and standing alone, might seem of minor importance, but when grouped together they form the force behind our fighting men. As to the activity of this one group, it is organized in the way it is to avoid too much time being absorbed, in view of calls made on each individual for so many things at this time. It is broken down to the place where no large amount of time or work falls on any one person. As County Chairman, I have been called into Portland at intervals as one member of the State Committee, Mrs. St. Pierre, State Chairman, presiding, to discuss various problems, and have had the opportunity of meeting women from far reaching parts of the state, working in this Block Leader Group. Each community has its own specific problems and as a result, no two are organized exactly alike. However, the ultimate aim remains the same. And it is possible, with no burden on any person, to reach each family.

MRS. BELL - I received a letter from Mr. Merriam, Lane County Defense Coordinator, some time ago telling me that they were considering asking the Block Leaders to register available help for farm work for the coming season. Mr. Bagan, of our local Employment Office told me, that after a registration made last year through their office, with only the assistance that they could gather they were delighted to know that the women of the town were organized and could take over the job of such registration. They felt that under our guidance their records would be much more complete and those signing up much more readily contacted when they were needed.

MRS. LOVE - Do you mean registering for actual farm work?

MRS. BELL - No. Not plowing or such work. But assisting in the harvesting of our crops, especially picking beans, which is one of our largest and most important crops. There was a shortage of help last year; this year it will be far more acute. It might interest you to know that 70% of the entire pack of the Eugene Fruit Growers will go to our armed forces this year. Not into Lend Lease and our Armed Forces but to our armed forces. They will depend on us for these canned goods and unless we are able to furnish the needed assistance in the harvesting of these foods, as well as in their processing and canning, we are failing our men at the front. And we must also remember that a great percentage of this help must be from the women of our community. Our men at home will help too, but they are as busy as we are, so we must do our part.

Do you think, Mrs. Husband, that will necessarily involve a great deal of work on the part of the Block Leaders, to make this canvass and registration?

MRS. HUSBAND - I can not see why it should. They have only their one block to register which will mean distributing the forms supplied by the

local Employment Office and after they have been completed to return them to their Sector Leader. They will then be filed in the Employment Office to be used when the time and need for them arises.

MRS. TAYLOR - Won't people feel that with their work in their own Victory Gardens, they are doing enough toward supplying needed food stuffs?

MRS. HUSBAND - I cannot see why they should feel so. After all think of the hundreds of thousands in our country who have no opportunity to grow anything. In the first place, no plot available for a garden spot. People who live in overcrowded defense areas. Apartment dwellers. Many situations come to mind in which it is not possible for them to have a garden. Those people have to eat. And besides that, our army must be fed. Also, peoples of our allied nations need everything we can send them. There must be a vast production of garden produce this year and with our men so thinned out, it is going to be necessary that civilians step in and replace the work of those who are in our armed forces and working in our defense industries. But I don't believe it is necessary to enlarge on this score any further. I think all of us realize the need for aid and each one of us feels that we want to do all in our power to help, in whatever way we can. The point I want to make is this, a registration of all those who can give ever so small amount of time, is necessary and it is a project that we as Block Leaders can do if called upon.

MRS. LOVE - Again, however, the question arises as to the care of children while the parents are engaged in this work of harvesting as well as the children of those women who can lend aid in a nursing capacity.

MRS. BELL - I brought that same question up to Mr. Bagan of the Employment Office when I was talking with him. He said that there would have to be provision made in the form of a nursery school or some comparable arrangement where competent assistants would be in charge to care for the children; competent enough to the extent that Mothers would have no hesitancy in

leaving their children with them. This question has, of course, reared its head on many occasions in this community as well as in all others, and eventually and in time there will have to be some such project worked out to the complete satisfaction of all of our mothers. Their first duty must be to their children, naturally, and until they can find a place for them where they are as well looked after as they are in their own homes, those mothers cannot leave them to help in our war effort in any way. We who are asking these mothers for that help must assist them in arranging for the care of their children. Four of the six women in the studio are fortunate enough to have children and while the rest of us are in thorough understanding of the situation, those four are facing the same problem.

MRS. WARREN - Miss Fitch, do you know of any other laid out for the Block Leaders other than those things already discussed?

MISS FITCH - As you no doubt realize, there is no definite program for this organization. They are simply to stand ready to do anything that arises, that can be done more readily and easily by these women. However, there has been talk of us securing a list of rooms available for service men coming into our town from Camp Adair for, especially, the weekends. These men come into our town by the hundreds each week, officers and privates all and our hotel facilities are not sufficient to take care of them. It is far better that we have rooms available to them, listed, rather than have them sleeping in the lobbies of the hotels, or worse yet, walking the streets, which is what is happening. And it would not be hard for us to do this. For instance: "Mrs. Smith, who lives just ~~at~~ two doors from us has two bedrooms upstairs, which, since her boys are in the service, are not being used. I'll ask her if she would let them out to service men" How simple a thing for us as Block Leaders to do.

Aside from the things we have discussed and the thing I have just mentioned, there are no definite plans for us in the future. But as a group

we are to stand ready to act when called upon, which will not be often but will be something of need when it does come. I feel we are an important cog in this great war program.

MRS. BELL - We have strayed so far from the original purpose behind the organization of the block leaders that I feel before we are through that it should again be mentioned. Our immediate and most essential work is the dissemination of information regarding our national rationing program. Our nation has always been a strong one. It has been strong because of the strength, physically and mentally of our people. As individuals we are fortunate to have been living in a land of abundance and plenty as our country has always been. But with the need for food stuffs of our army and our allies we are rapidly approaching a time when, even, in our land of plenty, there will be a definite scarcity of foods for our people. Tomorrow it is going to be difficult to place on our tables, meals that are balanced in the things necessary to build strong minds and bodies. Our mothers are building the minds and bodies of our future leaders and on the strength of those minds and bodies being built today, rests the strength of our nation in the future. Our mothers and home makers need the information that our Block Leaders can get to them. We are all of us anxious to do our part in this great struggle and the tasks assigned to the Block Leaders are ones that are vital to us all and things we can do without jeopardizing the time which we must give our homes.