

File 112

XXXXXXXXXXXX  
Merchandise Mart, Chicago, Illinois

AIR MAIL

September 22, 1942.

Mr. Lee C. McMillin,  
Fish and Wildlife Service,  
Funter,  
Via Juneau, Alaska.

Mr. Morton has forwarded to this office the extra copy of your letter of September 12 addressed to Mr. Johnston, who is now en route from Seattle to Funter Bay. The copy thus sent by Mr. Morton contains an attached note, apparently in your handwriting, as follows: "Copy for Washington or Chicago, if you desire. Mc."

After you have considered dispassionately the letter thus written by you commenting upon and complaining about conditions affecting the Pribilof natives evacuated to Funter Bay, I think you will realize that it is one to which you will not point with pride. It strikes me as that type of letter which, in the heat of circumstances, one may feel moved to write but which should be held until the next day and then destroyed. To anyone who has known you for a long time and has seen letters written by you in the past, the conclusion is that you were in anything but your best form when you wrote this one.

It is not my purpose to take up item by item the various matters which you mention, but to let you know that this office considers the tone of your letter as careless, or even disrespectful, and lacking in constructive or cooperative spirit. It is felt that you are entirely too critical and pessimistic. Constructive criticism is helpful, but carping criticism is not desirable.

I know that matters have been extremely difficult at Funter Bay for all concerned, but it is the duty of those in charge on the ground to make the best of conditions and do nothing which will tend to lower the morale of the natives or anyone else. There are things which all of us would like to see changed or improved, but it is realized that under war-time conditions many sacrifices must be made and hardships endured. Do not think for a moment that such difficulties are confined to you and the problems immediately before you at Funter Bay. I am sure that if you will be patient and will exercise the judgment of which you are capable, everyone concerned will realize that conditions will improve materially before long.

File 112

XXXXXXXXXXXX  
Merchandise Mart, Chicago, Illinois

AIR MAIL

September 22, 1942.

Mr. Lee C. McMillin,  
Fish and Wildlife Service,  
Funter,  
Via Juneau, Alaska.

Mr. Morton has forwarded to this office the extra copy of your letter of September 12 addressed to Mr. Johnston, who is now en route from Seattle to Funter Bay. The copy thus sent by Mr. Morton contains an attached note, apparently in your handwriting, as follows: "Copy for Washington or Chicago, if you desire. Mc."

After you have considered dispassionately the letter thus written by you commenting upon and complaining about conditions affecting the Pribilof natives evacuated to Funter Bay, I think you will realize that it is one to which you will not point with pride. It strikes me as that type of letter which, in the heat of circumstances, one may feel moved to write but which should be held until the next day and then destroyed. To anyone who has known you for a long time and has seen letters written by you in the past, the conclusion is that you were in anything but your best form when you wrote this one.

It is not my purpose to take up item by item the various matters which you mention, but to let you know that this office considers the tone of your letter as careless, or even disrespectful, and lacking in constructive or cooperative spirit. It is felt that you are entirely too critical and pessimistic. Constructive criticism is helpful, but carping criticism is not desirable.

I know that matters have been extremely difficult at Funter Bay for all concerned, but it is the duty of those in charge on the ground to make the best of conditions and do nothing which will tend to lower the morale of the natives or anyone else. There are things which all of us would like to see changed or improved, but it is realized that under war-time conditions many sacrifices must be made and hardships endured. Do not think for a moment that such difficulties are confined to you and the problems immediately before you at Funter Bay. I am sure that if you will be patient and will exercise the judgment of which you are capable, everyone concerned will realize that conditions will improve materially before long.

Naturally some of the natives will want to go elsewhere in an effort to get big wages, or they will desire to indulge themselves beyond all reason at times when away from immediate control. This is to be deplored but we must make the best of it and hope that in the future, when conditions enable return to the Pribilof Islands, they will settle down to their normal way of life and work.

Of course there may be some exceptions, but we can only hope that they will be few; in fact, I feel confident that ultimately operations at the Pribilof Islands will be resumed upon a satisfactory basis. We must see beyond the immediate situation, troublesome though it may be, and realize that in time conditions will be better.

During at least periods that some of the men work elsewhere, the Government is saved the cost of feeding them or giving any pay for local work, but in the course of such periods the Government is obligated to take care of their families who may be left at Funter Bay.

I can appreciate that when you wrote your letter on September 12, conditions at Funter Bay may have been at low ebb. Upon arrival of the Penguin, probably today or tomorrow, with a load of much-needed supplies and items of equipment and bringing Mr. Johnston to take personal supervisory charge, I am confident matters will straighten out reasonably well so that there will be no hardship or real suffering this winter.

This letter is written very calmly and in the most friendly spirit. It remains to be seen whether you can see the picture in its true and broad light. I have enough confidence in you to think that you will do so and take hold of the work with renewed vigor and in a completely cooperative and constructive way.

Ward T. Bower,  
Chief,  
Division of Alaska Fisheries.

WTB:ady

Copy to Mr. Johnston. ✓ AIR MAIL  
Copy to Mr. Morton.