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AND DAILY LEADER

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Tale of Red Tape

Governmental red tape reached a new high in the case of a Purple Heart veteran named Fred who decided it would be a nice, friendly thing if he and others in his office wrote some letters to the soldiers in Korea. Now if Fred had been working for the Plain Dealer or the East Ohio Gas Co., or a grocery concern, it would have been duck soup, but Fred, alas, worked for the United States Department of Agriculture. And wherever there is a government office there is red tape, miles and miles of it.

What happened, according to Congressman Oakley Hunter (R.-Cal.) in his weekly report to newspapers in his district, was this:

The agriculture recreation committee heard that Fred was drumming up some letters for the boys in Korea, and decided that they would have to supervise the project. They also decided that all agriculture employees should write letters—possibly because it would give them something to do, and they would at least look busy—and that they should adopt the First Marine Division, obtain names of the men, and write to them.

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The marines, no dummies, referred the deal to the Defense Department, where Fred's idea of writing a few letters to the soldiers was considered by the Defense Department public relations office, its civil affairs office, and finally the civil liaison office. Finally a colonel promised help if Fred could get a letter of authority from the Department of Agriculture.

All this had taken three months. Fred was sort of discouraged, for nothing takes the spontaneity out of an idea like having it kicked around for a while. He said he guessed he'd start all over again with just the fellows in his office. But his boss warned him that he couldn't go over people's heads.

Fred eventually got his okay from the Department of Agriculture and he took it over to the friendly colonel who had promised to help. But he couldn't deliver the okay, because the friendly colonel had been transferred. So he went back to the Defense Department, but nobody in the department could find letter writing "under the purview" of their office.

Fred was a scrapper through and through. He went back to the marines, but the Leathernecks said they dared not touch it, since defense had turned it down.

So Freddie took a desperate chance—he wrote to a chaplain in Korea, asking for the names of G. I.'s who got little or no mail; and in the course of time came the reply that the chaplain couldn't supply the names for reasons of security.

Dr. James Stallings, president of the Agriculture Employees Recreation Association said, according to the United Press, that Hunter had the story about right, but that it was a guy named Ed rather than Fred, who started the ill-fated project, sometime last January. He gave it up some months later after writing not one, but 20 chaplains.

The moral seems to be clear. If you plan to write a letter to the men in Korea, and happen to be working for the government, keep the idea to yourself. Just sit down and write—there is always somebody in every office who knows the name of a man in that poor, beaten-up country. By thus avoiding red tape the letter will have originality and sparkle which it would lose if it had to be prayed over by a number of governmental departments. And—no minor consideration—it will get there!

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