

2705 S. W. English Court,
Portland 1, Oregon,
June 7, 1955.

Honorable Anthony T. Lausi,
Director, Office of Territories,
U. S. Interior Department,
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Lausi:

This will reply to your telegram which was telephoned to me last Friday and subsequently received in the mail Yesterday. Rhubarb pulling began on May 31, 1955, when I became aware of it during the early part of the afternoon. I had been wondering when it would begin, how they would operate, and what they would do with it. I had a look and saw a large pile of crates and a large truck in the far end of the field. I learned that the crates and the truck belonged to the Birds Eye Company. There was a company driver with the truck. There was also an automobile in the field in which two inspectors from the company had come and spent about an hour watching the operation. Thirty-one male and twelve female patients and seven employees were in the field on the first day. The men worked about seven hours and the women about six hours. The weather that day was cool, cloudy, overcast, drizzly and showery. The next day they did not work because the company did not want any rhubarb on that day. June second witnessed about the same performance except that the weather was a little milder. That day the truck and crates were there, with about the same number of patients and employees in the field, and the same number of hours worked. June third only nine male patients were out, with less employees. The weather still was not good. I believe a smaller hospital truck was used that day. June fourth (Saturday) they had ten male patients out and used a hospital truck. The weather was not good on Saturday and I was told that the ground was very muddy. The rhubarb patch is ten acres. I have no idea as to the yield and price. It is going to the Birds Eye freezing plant at Hillsboro. I have trouble finding these things out because I am not supposed to know. I should look the other way, see nothing, ask no questions, hear nothing and say less. The people around here either will not or are afraid to talk. I would have none or would be unable to find any witnesses. They have never canned any rhubarb here. That would require too much sugar. They do use a very little fresh. I asked Wayne Coe last Friday how he classified the operation and he said it was industrial rehabilitation therapy, harvesting a crop. I told him that I had seen no OT cards and he told me that he did not think that any were necessary. I told him that it was my impression that according to you and Mr. Goodrick it probably should be covered that way and he said that he did not understand it that way. He said that this had always been their policy and that they would continue it until told by the Department to do otherwise. He tried to pass it all off with a wave of the hand, a few glib remarks, a few generalities about the therapeutic value of the work, etc. He insisted that the patients were properly clothed, that everybody goes out in the rain here, that they enjoyed it, etc. He refused to discuss the commercial end of it beyond saying that anybody would be foolish who did not expect them to sell their small surpluses, "plow them under or kill the little pigs". Whom does he think he is kidding? Yesterday and today the weather was fine and they were out in full force both days, with thirty men, ten women and six assorted employees. They expect to finish up tomorrow. I would like to suggest that you ask him how many tons he sold and to whom and how many thousand dollars he made, what he is going to do with it, how he will handle it on his income tax, etc.

Anything like this is a tough assignment for me as you may well know. It only tends to antagonize them more against me and to make them hate me more and give them more reason to try to get rid of me by whatever method they can. I do not like to fight with these people, but that is about the only way in which they want to deal. They will fight anybody to gain their own ends. Believe me, I do not like to write you letters like this one or the other one about the stenographer situation, but that is how it is. This job has already taken ten years off my life and I am not looking for a heart attack or a stroke on account of it. The apparent insecurity of it is not very beneficial either. They are hard to keep up with for one man and harder to stay ahead of, especially with little or no assistance. I have heard employees refer to it as Operation Rhubarb or Operation Birds Eye. The female occupational therapist who had to be out in the field and did not like the assignment confided in me that she did not like the principle of the thing, the patients being exploited, but that as long as she needed the job she had better keep her mouth shut. This just gives you a general idea of the thing. To try to go into detail would be more circumstantial and burdensome. To try to prove anything would be futile. I heard that they can even hold their own with Congressional Committees. Neither one of them has had much to say since they came back from Washington. The employees say that Henry has been generally unfriendly lately. They are now trying to get their APA inspection before the first of July. I am going to give them a copy of your telegram and write you another letter of which I will give them a copy. That I will do tomorrow. If you wish any further details, please write me and I will supply them if I can.

With best wishes and personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

G. F. Keller
George F. Keller, M. D.