My dear Mr. Secretary:

You will recall that two or three weeks ago, when I heard that the State and War Departments were discussing the issuance on or about March 1st of a directive or statement of policy calling for the closure of camps for displaced persons in Germany by July 1st, I visited Undersecretary Dean Acheson and protested against the making of this decision prior to the meeting of the Council of UNRRA which convenes in Atlantic City on March 15th.

Last night you advised me by telephone that the War Department planned to issue a directive or statement calling for the closing of displaced persons camps on July 1st. I have not yet seen the statement but, as I told you, I think it would be most unfortunate if any unilateral action were taken by the United States Government alone or in concern with other governments prior to the meeting of the Council of UNRRA, which is only two weeks away.

At the last meeting of the UNRRA Council, UNRRA was charged by its members with certain responsibilities for displaced persons in cooperation with the military authorities. The acceptance of these responsibilities by UNRRA was contingent upon the fulfillment of certain functions by the military forces of the United States, the United Kingdom and France. The decisions then made were to be reviewed by the UNRRA Council at its next meeting on March 15th. The Central Committee of UNRRA, on which of course the United States Government is represented, is now studying and reviewing this problem and the continuance of UNRRA's present responsibilities for displaced persons will be a major matter for consideration by the Council.

The Honorable

The Secretary of State

Washington, D. C.
Having in mind the action of the United Nations Organization establishing a special committee to study and report on the refugee problem, and the consideration to be given by the UNRRA Council at its next meeting of this important and difficult problem, I repeat that it would be most unfortunate if any unilateral action should be taken by the United States Government or by other governments prior to the meeting of the Council of UNRRA on March 15th. UNRRA, as an international organization, depends for its effectiveness upon the support given to it by its leading members, and we have always felt that the United States has taken a major part in supporting UNRRA.

In view of the foregoing considerations, I urgently request that no action be taken by the United States Government at this time.

Sincerely yours,

Herbert H. Lehman
Director General