

(A260: Board of General Welfare and Public Relations)

Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies (Fresno)

Record Group A260

Board of General Welfare and Public Relations. Records, 1934-1967.

4.7 linear feet

Historical note

The creation of a Mennonite Brethren relief agency was precipitated by the great upheaval in Europe following the first World War, particularly that experienced by the Mennonites in Russia. Prior to this time, the Board of Foreign Mission handled relief work for the conference, but in 1924 the "*Komitee für Hilfeleitung und Einwanderung*" (Committee for Relief and Immigration) was established. The committee's primary focus was the provision of famine relief for Russian Mennonites in cooperation with Mennonite Central Committee, and assistance in their resettlement to Canada or South America. Its name was later shortened to "*Hilfskomitee*."

In 1939 the board merged with the Peace Committee to become the "*Komitee für Wehrfrage und Hilfswerk*." Activities related to peace and nonresistance became an increasingly important part of the board's agenda with the onset of the second World War, during which time it coordinated Mennonite Brethren participation in the Civilian Public Service program. Also during this time the board adopted its English title, "Board of General Welfare and Public Relations."

The end of the second World War stimulated Mennonite Brethren relief work to new levels. The board supervised the distribution of large amounts of aid to European refugees suffering in the aftermath of the war. A second wave of Mennonite immigrants to Paraguay and Brazil during this time also demanded the board's attention. The board provided aid and guidance to the Mennonites of South America until the early 1960s. It sent numerous workers to Paraguay and Brazil to serve in evangelism and education.

In 1960 the Board of General Welfare accepted responsibility for the newly-inaugurated Christian Service program (Record Group A250-1). This organization provided voluntary service positions for young people of the conference. Christian Service grew rapidly during the 1960s as many young men sought alternative positions with that organization in place of military duty during the Vietnam War.

The Board of General Welfare and Public Relations was terminated at the 1966 General Conference, when it merged with the Board of Foreign Missions to form the Board of Missions and Services.

Scope and content note

Most of the material in this record group dates from the 1950s and 1960s and concerns the board's work in Paraguay and Brazil. All material created specifically by the Christian Service program is treated as a subgroup of Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services.

Organization and arrangement

This record group is organized into four series: I. Minutes, 1937-1967. II. Correspondence, 1940-1967. III. Financial records, 1934-1967. IV. Other material, 1940-1967. Series II is organized into three subseries: I. P.C. Hiebert correspondence, 1940-1958. II. M.A. Kroeker correspondence, 1954-1967. III. Correspondence of other board members and staff persons, 1955-1967. Series I is arranged chronologically. Each subseries within series II is arranged alphabetically by correspondent. Series III is arranged chronologically by form of material. Series IV is arranged by topic or format.

Language note

All minutes through 1943 are in German with typewritten English translations. A large portion of the correspondence is in German.

Restrictions on access

This record group contains no restricted materials.

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Citation guidelines

Cite as: General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches Board of General Welfare and Public Relations Records, Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Fresno, Cal.

Related records

The following record groups and subgroups contain material related to this record group: Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services. Paraguay Mission Records (A250-11), Licht den Indianern Records (GC232), Gerhard B. Giesbrecht Papers (M61).

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