

Difficulties In Displacement: The Case Of Mrs. Fannie Cotham

Lobelville, Tenn
Jan. 1946

(postmarked Jan. 23)

Mr. James P. Pope
TVA Director
Knoxville, Tenn.

Dear Mr. Pope:

I am writting you to see if I am not entiteled to some help from the Tennessee Valey Athority which I fully believe I am & with my explanation I believe you will say so too. I am without a home on account of this TVA buisness ever since Aug. 15, 1944 when they closed me out, with nowhire to move my household contents of my own. So I had to store them at different places just anywhire I could and live out of a suitcase otherwards visetting all this time "which I am worne out".

I had a nice 2 story 9 room house with 13 windows, 14 doors, 3 good brick chimneys, Tennent house, nice barn & etc. ok it was heart rendering to be closed out of my own dear home.

I had a letter from Washington long long before in regard to this buisness stateing they regretted the heartaches it would cause but would see that I was as well situated elsewhire as I all ready were but they did nothing of the kind. Just moved me out before I lost out.

The TVA men advised me all along before to not worry that they looked after people like myself that had no one to look to for help. They said they would locate me a convienent home well situated whire I would be satisfied and ask me again & again to not worry. I would be taken care off they saw & understood my condition. "Mr. Walker" if you can get in touch with him. It did help my feelings at that time quite a lot, thinking I would be looked after.

But I am so disapointed & dissatisfied roveing around homeless & helpless with arthritis that I can hardly live.

Source: Records of the Tennessee Valley Authority,
Records Group Number 142, National Archives, Atlanta,
National Archives Identifier:1265105

<http://www.archives.gov/atlanta/exhibits/item348.html>

I am a widow woman with no brothers or anyone liveing to help me out & my expearance, when you are well & happy friends stands all around but when you are grieved sick & helpless there's scarcely a friend to be found is why I am asking you as a Christian wount you please see that I have a conveyant home somewhite all my own in place of the one I had to give up to the TVA which was a nice one & I was in no ones way, I am a human a Christian & been tenderly cared for. Its just to bad to throw me without a home unless they get me another one as good.

Surley you will do something about it. Its going to drive me craizy if there isent something done. I can't make any arrangements, am perfectly helpless to the situation, can't even walk only with crutches & have been at so much expence my little account is about gone. Don't know what on earth will become of me unless the TVA will provide hope and pray for a favorable reply from you soon.

Mrs. W. L. Catham or

(the same person (Mrs.) Fannie Catham

Mr. Pope: If the TVA won't give me a home please get in touch with them at Washington and see if they would give me a lifetime pention so I could board at a hotel and have medical aid. I am bound to do something & can't without your help. They should do this for me if nothing else because they taken my liveing, medical aid, and happyness away from me when they made me get out of my lifetime home.

The weather is so bad and I am so helpless I need a stationarried stay place soon if possable. Any arrangements you can make for me will be highly apprieciaded. And you will be rewarded in Heaven for the kind deed in time of need. I am all alone with hurt feelings homeless & helpless so please let me hear from you soon.

Thanks in advance.

Mrs. Fannie Catham

(copy of handwritten letter)

M. G. Little, Manager of Properties

January 29, 1946

Reservoir Property Management Department, Paris, Tennessee

M. A. DeVoe, Assistant Director

Reservoir Property Management Department, Knoxville, Tennessee

INVESTIGATION OF LETTER FROM MRS. W. L. COTHAM TO DIRECTOR POPE

I am attaching a copy of a letter received by Director Pope from Mrs. W. L. Cotham of Lobelville telling of her difficulties in finding a satisfactory home since TVA purchased her property and asking for assistance.

This is clearly a matter for a Population Readjustment worker to handle, but since we no longer have such a staff, I am asking you to have a suitable person make an immediate investigation. I believe Mr. Paul Montgomery of your staff is experienced in Population Readjustment work, and there may be others. I think whoever does it should visit Mrs. Cotham if possible.

Will you please give us a report of your findings as soon as possible so that we may submit the information to Director Pope at an early date.

M A D
M. A. DeVoe

Attachment

CC: James P. Pope, 418 NSB

G. M. Baker, 404 AB

RECEIVED
Office of Director Pope
FEB 1 1946

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095

February 1, 1946

✓
Mrs. W. L. Cotham
Lobelville
Tennessee

Dear Mrs. Cotham:

I have your recent letter explaining your difficulties in obtaining a satisfactory home since your property was purchased by TVA. I am asking that a representative from the Manager of Properties office at Paris call on you and discuss the situation.

I am afraid I must tell you, however, that there is nothing that the TVA can do except to advise you.

Sincerely yours,

James P. Pope
Director

JIS:HPH:WMP

CC: J. Ed Campbell, 507 BKB
G. R. Clapp, 319 NSB
M. G. Little, RPM, Paris
J. I. Snyder, 304 AB

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : James P. Pope, Board of Directors, 418 NSB DATE: March 12, 1946
FROM : J. Ed Campbell, Director, RPM Department, 507 BKB
SUBJECT: INVESTIGATION OF LETTER FROM MRS. W. L. COTHAM TO DIRECTOR POPE

I am attaching a copy of a memorandum from Malcolm G. Little, Manager of Properties in the Western Area, regarding his investigation of the case of Mrs. W. L. Cotham, who wrote you some time ago and to whom you replied on February 1.

Mr. Little's report appears to explain the situation quite clearly and suggests to us no need for further correspondence with Mrs. Cotham. We shall be very glad, however, to obtain any additional information you may desire.

HFH:GG

CC: G. M. Baker, 404 AB



RECEIVED
Office of Director Pope
MAR 15 1946

Mr. M. A. DeVoe, Assistant Director, Reservoir Property Mgmt. Dept., Knoxville
Malcolm G. Little, Manager of Properties, Western Area, Paris
March 7, 1946

INVESTIGATION OF LETTER FROM MRS. W. L. COTHAM TO DIRECTOR POPE

This is in reference to your memorandum of January 29 concerning the above subject. I have had members of my staff review the record in the case and to contact Mrs. Cotham regarding her present situation. As a result I am able to give you a report on my findings as follows:

The Tennessee Valley Authority acquired flowage easement on 35 acres of land and malaria control rights over 103 acres of land from Mrs. Fannie Daniel Cotham, et al. For these rights \$2670.05 was paid. This was purchased under an "E" Form easement which was a combination flowage and malaria control rights easement. It is my understanding that when this property was purchased only a life interest of Mrs. Cotham was recognized by the Title Section of the TVA. For this she was paid only approximately 6 per cent of the money paid by the TVA, the balance going to relatives of her husband. At the time of the purchase of the rights in the land, her husband had been dead 10 years. According to Population Readjustment records, Mrs. Cotham stated that she and her husband bought this place from an estate and that she helped him during his lifetime to pay for same. When he died he left no will, and according to her the TVA Land Acquisition representative stated that the relatives of her husband would receive the greater part of the money for the rights which were purchased by the TVA. I believe that Mrs. Cotham's greatest contention was, that had not the TVA required her to move from the home she was living in, she would at least have had a house that she could live in the balance of her life. By moving away she lost even this interest.

Population Readjustment workers made various visits to Mrs. Cotham attempting to work out plans for her removal. Mrs. Cotham had one brother who was fairly well able to assist her. This brother lived just outside the malaria control zone and within about 6 miles of his sister. Due to Mrs. Cotham's belief that she had not been treated fairly by the TVA in the purchase of rights which would require her to move, she refused to move to her brother's house until she was finally given notice by Population Readjustment workers that she could no longer live in her home as the time had expired when anyone could live in the depopulation zone. Just prior to this time her brother with whom she should have moved had died. This forced Mrs. Cotham to move into the home of her sister, Mrs. Peters, with whom, I understand, she has been living since this time.

When Mrs. Cotham was first contacted by Population Readjustment workers she was in a terribly crippled state physically caused from, she said, arthritis. She was unable to walk about except with the aid of crutches and then only to a limited extent. Neighbors in the vicinity of her old home assisted her in house work as well as helping her in the rental of her farm lands and keeping her in food and household necessities. Mrs. Cotham still believes that she was deprived of something when she had to leave her old home although she did move into the house of her sister.

Mr. M. A. DeVoe
Malcolm G. Little
March 7, 1946

INVESTIGATION OF LETTER FROM MRS. W. L. COTHAM TO DIRECTOR POPE

I had one of the field men visit Mrs. Cotham recently. He explained to her that the TVA had no means by which she could be given assistance and suggested that she make an application for Old Age Assistance to the Welfare Department of Perry County. From information received later from neighbors, it is thought that she still has some money in the bank, in fact enough to prohibit her from receiving assistance from the Welfare Department. They think it is her reluctance to part with any of this money which causes her to do without even the bare necessities of life. They state that she has evidently spent some of the money which she had as she has been for short times in hospitals both in Nashville and Memphis, Tennessee. Although Mrs. Cotham insists that she is merely visiting with her sister, and that she needs a place to live, it is my opinion that she is as well or possibly better off then she was when she lived alone in the house which was vacated under the contract with the TVA by which it acquired malaria control rights on the land.

EWB:ah

Lobelville Tenn.

July 10th 1948.

Mr James P. Cope. T.V.A. Director.

Knoxville Tenn.

Excuse me please for writing to inform you that I am still out of a home on an account of the T.V.A. would you please see that they locate me some place? I think I have been furnished enough on account of this being out of a home for almost 2 years.

I have no help of any kind have out lived my loved ones and were out welcome with my friends. I just can't go on this way and have tried so hard to make some arrangements and can't with hurt feelings to a great extent. I hate to ask you again.

but it appeals to me that the T.V.A. ~~should~~ could be so much help to me if they only would select some nice convenient place for me in town with several rooms so I could rent rooms for an income.

Mr Cope I am not asking the T.V.A. for anything only assistance I can make a down payment & let the rent finish paying out if I can get a house with enough rooms to justify besides one for myself. I wrote them 2 weeks past at Harris Tenn. but they never even answered my letter. I thought surely they would come & advise with me. I feel positive that men folks could find something suitable on these terms that I could buy otherwise I can't ever have another home or living (over)

^{to} Once again I am pleading for assistance from the
T. A. C. Thanks in advance for any favors, would be
appreciated so much

And please don't disappoint me but let me
hear from you soon

I am so nervous over no situation I feel

awaiting & oblige

Mrs. Fannie Batham.

P. S.

if you will get them to come & talk with me
I think we can make some arrangements. for I know of
plenty of places to sell. but I can't go see about them
don't delay but write today

F. C.

Husbands Initials, Mrs. W. L. Batham.

7-11-46 (8) cc Clapp for answer

RECEIVED
Office of Director Police
JUL 11 1946

Friday morn July 19, 1946

Dear Mr. Pope.

Please tell me this just why you did not ans. my letter? I surely expected to hear from you in some way. Mr. Montgomery, from Parris, Tenn. was passing through & stoped by a few minutes just long enough to tell me they couldnt do anything for me. never advised at all. seemed to be in an aufle hurry. In fact he said so didnt have time to talk to me & said I would have to look to friends for assistance.

My friends are not the cause of me being out of a home. I told him I had wrote you he didnt seam to like it. I ask him if you told them to help me they would wouldnt they? He said yes if Mr. Pope says so, we haft to do what he says.

Awaitting to know why?

Fannie Cotham

(copy of a handwritten postal card)

To be associated with her letter of July 10 to Mr. Pope,
for answering

July 23, 1946

604.3
095

Mrs. W. L. Cotham
Lobelville
Tennessee

Dear Mrs. Cotham:

Director Pope has asked me to reply to your letter of July 10, and your postal card of July 19, in which you request TVA assistance in obtaining a home and a source of income.

Following the receipt of your letter to Mr. Pope last January and his reply on February 1, 1946, TVA representatives of our Paris office discussed your problems with you, explained that we were without legal authority to assist you, and made suggestions of certain things you might do in asking help and guidance from agencies established to render that type of service. The results of the contacts with you were reported to me and to Mr. Pope, and we were under the impression that you understood TVA's position. The records show too that our population readjustment workers also made several visits to you and made diligent effort to assist you with your problem. TVA does not have legal authority to spend public funds to help individuals in undertakings such as you suggest, and I regret to inform you that following a thorough investigation of the possibility of TVA offering some assistance, we can find no way in which that might be done.

Very truly yours,

TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

ORIGINAL SIGNED
J. ED CAMPBELL

J. Ed Campbell, Director
Reservoir Property Management
Department

CC: James P. Pope, 418 NSB
Gordon R. Clapp, 319 NSB
M. G. Little, Paris

RECEIVED
Office of Director Pope
JUL 23 1946