

## CHAPTER V

### MASSACHUSETTS HALIFAX RELIEF COMMITTEE

On the morning of Thursday, December 6, 1917, at 11.20 A.M., while the Board of Food Administration was in session at the State House, Assistant Food Administrator James J. Phelan was hurriedly called to the telephone. He returned to report that a terrible catastrophe had befallen Halifax; that two vessels — the "Mont Blanc," loaded with munitions, and the "Imo" — having collided, the resulting explosion had laid half the city in ruins.

Accompanied by Mr. Endicott, Mr. Phelan then went directly to the Executive Chamber to inform His Excellency Governor McCall. Every known means was immediately put in operation to acquire as far as possible a full and accurate report of what had taken place, and the full extent of the disaster, by checking up with the Boston newspapers and the Associated Press such news as had come in over their lines. It transpired, however, that the only information they were able to obtain was very confused and unreliable. Undoubtedly a terrible accident had taken place, involving great loss of life and property, but by reason of the destruction of wires such news as came through was fragmentary. This was chiefly to be accounted for by the fact that the Dominion government had commandeered the few wires left standing. Having ascertained all the trustworthy news to be had, the Governor despatched the following telegram to the mayor of Halifax: —

Understand your city in danger from explosion and conflagration. Reports only fragmentary. Massachusetts stands ready to go to the limit in rendering every assistance you may be in need of. Wire me immediately.

It was then decided that a full meeting of the Committee of One Hundred should be called as soon as possible, and a telephone message was sent to each member requesting his attendance at the Governor's Council Chamber at 2.30 the same afternoon. Notwithstanding so short a notice, more than sixty members responded to the summons, but up to the time the meeting adjourned it proved impossible to obtain any additional news from Halifax, — in fact, the city seemed to be completely isolated.

Dr. William A. Brooks, Acting Surgeon-General of the Commonwealth, and chief of the Medical Department of the State Guard, advised that a base hospital unit for doctors, nurses, medical supplies, etc., be at once organized, to be ready at a moment's notice to depart for the stricken city. Mr. Endicott then recommended that unless news came to the contrary, a relief expedition, with the base hospital unit suggested by Dr. Brooks and what emergency supplies could be quickly collected, should start for Halifax without waiting for the advices called for by the Governor, even at the risk of its later being found unnecessary, in which event it could immediately return. Mr. Hustis, formerly president, and at that time receiver for the Boston & Maine Railroad, when asked how soon a special train could be made ready, at once replied, "Within half an hour of notification by your Committee." Later in the afternoon it was definitely decided to carry out Dr. Brooks' proposal, and at 10 o'clock the same night, December 6, 1917, a train carrying doctors and nurses, with Mr. John F. Moors in charge of the Red Cross workers, — the latter having been invited by the Committee on Public Safety to join the party, — and a large assortment of medical supplies, clothing and food, started on its way to the devastated city in charge of Mr. A. C. Ratshesky.

Previously, and after the meeting of the Committee of One Hundred, Governor McCall sent a second telegram to the mayor of Halifax, as follows: —

Since sending my telegram this morning offering unlimited assistance an important meeting of citizens has been held and Massachusetts stands

ready to offer aid in any way you can avail yourself of it. We are prepared to send forward immediately a special train with surgeons, nurses and other medical assistance, but await advices from you.

After the party left Boston, Governor McCall appointed the following to be members of the Massachusetts Halifax Relief Committee:—

Henry B. Endicott, *Chairman.*  
James J. Phelan, *Vice-Chairman.*  
Matthew Luce, *Secretary.*  
Robert Winsor, *Treasurer.*

James J. Storrow.  
A. C. Ratshesky.  
Joseph B. Russell.  
Robert F. Herrick.  
W. Murray Crane.  
George H. Lyman.  
Mrs. Nathaniel Thayer.  
John F. O'Connell.

B. Preston Clark.  
J. Frank O'Hare.  
Charles S. Baxter.  
Edwin U. Curtis.  
George C. Lee.  
Walter C. Baylies.  
James Jackson.

Messrs. James Jackson and Walter C. Baylies, members of the above Committee, also represented the Red Cross.

The Committee met for organization Friday morning, December 7, at 10 o'clock, and sent out the following appeal for funds:—

#### AN APPEAL FOR FUNDS FOR HALIFAX

It is evident from all reports on hand that thousands are in great distress as a result of the great catastrophe which has spread death and devastation in Halifax.

Generous contributions will be needed to carry on the work of relieving immediate distress by providing clothes, food, medicines and material for the temporary housing of the homeless and suffering. Later will come the great work of rehabilitation to which we are all committed as near neighbors of the stricken city.

Cash will be required to do all this, and Massachusetts may be called upon for a million dollars. Everybody is asked to subscribe generously and as quickly as possible.

Mr. Endicott also sent the following telegram to the subcommittees on Public Safety throughout the State:—

Governor McCall has appointed from Committee of One Hundred of the Massachusetts Committee on Public Safety, Massachusetts Halifax Relief Committee, of which Committee he has appointed me chairman.

It is Governor McCall's desire that all local Public Safety Committees, men and women, throughout the Commonwealth shall co-operate in the raising of funds for this work. Will you please call your committee together at once for this purpose and set them to work raising funds. Send all checks to Robert Winsor, Treasurer, care of Kidder, Peabody & Co., Boston. Your Committee is hereby delegated as local representative of the Massachusetts Halifax Relief Committee.

The Committee met again early on Saturday morning, December 8, and established a Halifax Information Bureau at the State House in charge of Mr. B. F. Felt, which was to act as an information bureau to those having friends and relatives at Halifax.

At noon on the same day a Halifax relief meeting was called at Faneuil Hall, at which Governor McCall, Mayor Curley, Mr. Endicott and Messrs. McLeod and McIntyre of the British and Canadian Missions made short addresses, pledging all the help in their power to relieve the unfortunate people who had suffered from the disaster. All that day, and far into the night, as well as on Sunday, the various sub-committees of the Relief Committee worked persistently, striving to collect the needed supplies and to provide for transportation facilities, Mr. J. A. Malone and Mr. E. G. Preston giving the invaluable assistance of their long experience, and buying quickly and wisely much of the supplies eventually sent to Halifax.

The United States Shipping Board, through Mr. Howard, chairman, loaned the steamship "Calvin Austin" to the Committee. This boat, in command of Capt. Eugene O'Donnell, sailed from Boston at 3 o'clock Sunday afternoon, December 9, three days after the explosion.

The cargo was under the personal supervision of the Hon. Edmund Billings, who with Deputy Collector Alfred Anderson accompanied the expedition. These officers, together with Special Deputy Collector Eli Perry, Deputies

R. G. Frye and S. J. Devlin, and Deputy Surveyor Moses B. Mann, were of inestimable help to the Committee on Public Safety in this emergency, as they proved to be at all times whenever their assistance was called for.

The equipment consisted of about \$300,000 worth of supplies, together with an emergency wrecking crew fully furnished, a crew of glaziers and trained workmen, a large supply of window glass, putty, etc., and the following articles:—

Mattresses (packages), . . . . .	985
Cots, . . . . .	591
Pillows (bundles), . . . . .	86
Castings (keg), . . . . .	1
Flour (bags), . . . . .	200
Canned beef (cases), . . . . .	115
Canned meat (cases), . . . . .	100
Condensed milk (cases), . . . . .	100
Canned beans (cases), . . . . .	200
Coffee (cases), . . . . .	62
Tea (cases), . . . . .	26
Sausage (cases), . . . . .	2
Putty (packages), . . . . .	25
Dry goods (cases), . . . . .	5
Shoes (cases), . . . . .	6
Oilcloth (cases), . . . . .	2
Rubbers (case), . . . . .	1
Cotton piece goods (bales), . . . . .	4
Roofing paper (rolls), . . . . .	1,870
Glass (cases), . . . . .	1,496
Canned soup (cases), . . . . .	200
Evaporated milk (case), . . . . .	100
Baker's cocoa (case), . . . . .	1
Malted milk (cases), . . . . .	40
Sugar (bags), . . . . .	15
Crackers (cases), . . . . .	200
Second-hand clothing (packages), . . . . .	700
Clothing, etc. (cases), . . . . .	200
Blankets (bundles), . . . . .	305
Bread (packages), . . . . .	150
Cheese (cases), . . . . .	50
Oleomargarine (packages), . . . . .	27

The "Calvin Austin" almost immediately plunged into a heavy sea, and after a rough trip arrived at Halifax on Wednesday, December 12.

On Sunday, December 9, after the departure of the "Calvin Austin," the Committee reassembled at the State House to consider what further purchases should be made, and to arrange for the sailing of a second steamer, the "Northland," on Tuesday, December 11. This vessel was lent to the Committee, free of charge, by the Eastern Steamship Company. Mr. John F. O'Connell of the Committee accompanied the steamer in charge of the following supplies: —

Beaver board (rolls), . . . . .	2,084
Crackers (cases), . . . . .	200
Gasoline (drums), . . . . .	10
Second-hand clothing (packages), . . . . .	510
Nails (kegs), . . . . .	51
Cement (drums), . . . . .	23
Dry goods (cases), . . . . .	13
Glass (cases), . . . . .	837
Rubbers (cases), . . . . .	94
Boots and shoes (cases), . . . . .	1,045
Fittings (keg), . . . . .	1
Glazier tools (bundle), . . . . .	1
Cot beds, . . . . .	420

On December 10 Mr. Endicott advised Mr. Ratshesky by telegram that ten motor trucks had been forwarded as a present from Massachusetts to Halifax, and that more would be forthcoming if needed. These trucks, valued at \$25,000, were secured by Mr. H. J. McAlman, president of the Automobile Dealers' Association, before noon on Monday, December 10, and, under the command of Capt. J. S. Hathaway of the Governor's staff, also went on the "Northland." Each truck, manned by a driver and well supplied with gasoline, was ready for service on landing. They proved of inestimable value, enabling supplies to be transferred to different points which up to that time had been inaccessible because of the deep carpet of snow that covered the city.

A great deal of difficulty was encountered in obtaining, at so short notice, some of the articles which were deemed most necessary. For example, the market at that time was practically denuded of all kinds of rubber footwear, yet 5,000 pairs were secured. Certain shoe firms gave these, as well as other articles; and, generally, substantial reductions were made from the wholesale prices. Mr. Charles Sumner Bird gave three carloads of roofing materials, and the Loose-Wiles Company, 400 cases of crackers. Mrs. Russell S. Codman, as chairman of the Special Committee of the Special Aid Society, added three truck loads of clothing, consisting mostly of underwear collected by the Society. The Red Cross sent 275 cases of selected clothing.

In the meantime Mr. Winsor and his Committee were at work collecting a fund. Subscriptions began to pour in from every section of the Commonwealth, finally reaching the sum of \$699,189.91. In addition, a great many needed and valuable gifts of clothing, roofing paper, footwear, etc., were brought together ready for shipment.

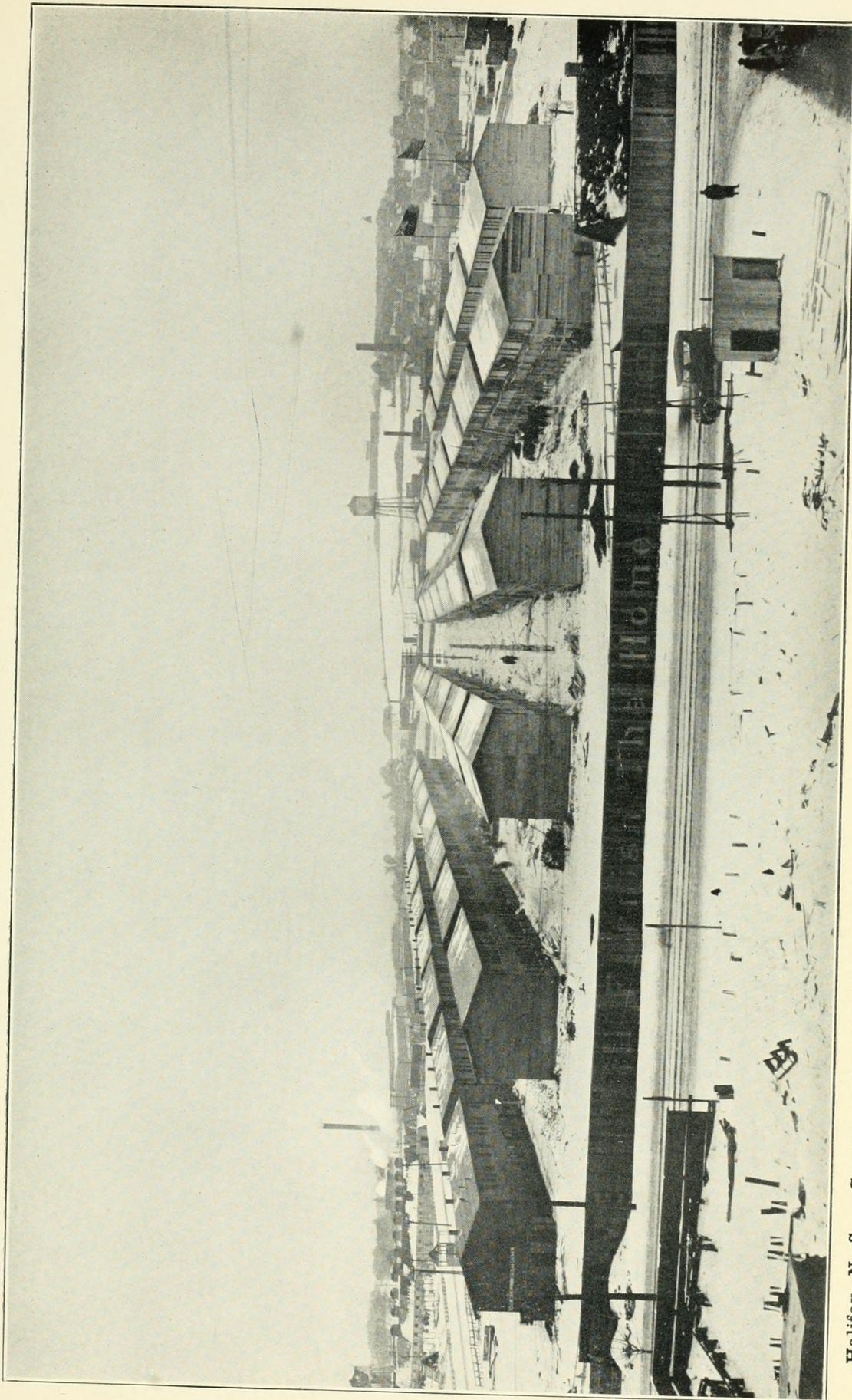
Very soon more normal means of communication were established, and despatches began to arrive from Halifax expressing the very great gratitude of her people for the help given them by the citizens of Massachusetts. On Wednesday, January 12, however, as a natural result of so great a disarrangement of affairs, the Halifax authorities wired to delay sending any more nurses, doctors, helpers, food or clothing of any kind, until further advised, on account of the great congestion and impossibility of properly handling the goods on arrival.

The party, under charge of Mr. Ratschesky, it will be remembered, left Boston at 10 o'clock on the evening of the disaster; and beginning at Portland, Me., and from thence regularly thereafter at each station until the arrival at St. John, the mayor of Halifax was telegraphed to, without any answer being received in reply. Again, during a short delay at McAdam Junction it was sought to ascertain what was going on at Halifax, but only unsatisfactory and vague

rumors were obtainable. These became more and more grave as time went on. At every stop after leaving the Junction, workers bound for Halifax in various capacities waylaid the train seeking accommodations, and Mr. Ratshesky issued instructions that every available space should be filled, with preference given to the doctors and nurses. Directions were also issued to Captains Hyde and Lapham of the Quartermasters' Department to secure additional drugs during the stop at St. John, and they were successful in getting aboard large quantities of all kinds of medical supplies before the train pulled out of the depot.

It was not until the party reached St. John that any full intimation of the seriousness of the disaster was received; and with this came the news that all the telegraphic and telephone wires within a long radius from Halifax were down, and that no word had come through of just what had happened, except by relay and in a roundabout way. A wire was at once sent to Mr. Endicott, asking him to have forwarded a train load of window glass and putty as well as building materials of all kinds.

On leaving St. John the party encountered a heavy snow-storm, which proved one of the severest of the winter, accompanied by a driving gale, the heavy snow piling up in great drifts and making progress more and more difficult, so that a large freight engine had to be attached to the train. Beyond Truro and Moncton the storm increased to a veritable blizzard, and the engine finally broke down, causing a delay of several hours for repairs. The climax was reached at the time the party started to ascend the up grade at Folleigh Mountain, when the conductor in charge, and also General Agent Howard of the Canadian government, stated that an enormous snowdrift which lay across the track altogether prevented further progress. But Mr. Ratshesky, fortified with official telegraphic orders to give the party the right of way under all conditions, pleaded with the officials to do everything known to railroad men to clear the track. Ordinarily, no attempt would have been



Halifax, N. S. — Governor McCall Apartments. Largest apartment houses in the world, sheltering three hundred and twenty families, completed in three hundred and twenty working hours

made to keep the train in motion, but all hands understood how urgent was the need, and worked with might and main to clear the track. At last, by hard shoveling and the use of steam and ramming, the drift, standing higher than the door of the baggage car, was ploughed through amid the "hurrahs" of all on board. On arriving at Truro an extra engine with crew were found waiting for the final haul to Halifax. The city was reached at about 3 o'clock on the morning of December 8, the passengers, including those taken on board at Fredericton Junction, now numbering about sixty-five. The last stop was made at Rockingham Junction, about six miles from the terminus, a detour being necessary around the city on account of the destruction of the depot at Halifax. The terminus was reached at about 7 A.M., whence communication was quickly made with Sir Robert L. Borden, Premier of Canada, whose private car was on a side track close by, and who was not slow to express his gratitude to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for her prompt response. The party, accompanied by the Premier, then went to City Hall to present Governor McCall's letter to the mayor, and to make preliminary arrangements. The vehicle that conveyed them from the depot had been used night and day in carrying the wounded to hospitals and the dead to the morgue. The driver, a young man, had lost his whole family, consisting of a wife and four children. As Mr. Ratschesky afterwards said, "It was a gruesome start."

The streets they passed through were blocked with débris and covered with freshly fallen snow, and it was only with considerable difficulty that the party arrived by 9 o'clock at City Hall in the center of the city. From here an awful sight presented itself. Buildings lay shattered on all sides, with chaos and confusion everywhere.

Unfortunately the mayor was away, but the party found awaiting them His Honor Governor McCullum Grant of Nova Scotia; General Benson, Military Commandant of the District; Admiral Chambers, Naval Commandant of

the District; Colonel McKelvie Bell, Military Medical Officer; Chief Justice Harris of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia; Chairman R. T. MacIlreith, who was in charge of the medical relief of the city; and members of the Halifax Temporary Relief Committee. In the same room, about 12 by 20 feet in size, were assembled men and women trying to organize different departments of relief. Other rooms in the building were jammed to their utmost capacity with people of every age and sex begging for doctors, nurses, food and clothing for themselves and members of their families. It was evident that in this condition of turmoil the first necessity was a definite plan of organization. The Relief Committee secured as headquarters the City Club building, centrally located, where a thorough organization was put under way. It was at once apparent that first of all a Transportation Committee was needed in order to handle the crowds of people flocking to the city to help in relief work, and also to facilitate the arrival of the large quantities of food, clothing and other necessities coming in from all parts of Canada and the United States. Other committees included in the organization were: a Committee on Supplies, divided into food and clothing; a Finance Committee; a Committee on Construction, to take charge of buildings partially destroyed which had to be demolished or temporarily repaired, and to collect building supplies and labor from Canada and the United States; a Relief Committee, in which the members of the Red Cross should take an active part, and for which their experience made them peculiarly adapted; a Housing Committee, to provide for those whose homes had been entirely destroyed or which could not be repaired, and also to care for the large number of people entering the city from Canada and the United States; a Medical Department, to apportion the work of the surgeons, doctors, nurses and assistants; and a Warehouse Department, to sort, store and distribute all the supplies now being rushed into the city.

The most pressing demand was for doctors and nurses.

This was partially met by scattering members of the hospital unit through different quarters of the city, with instructions to keep the central office informed of their whereabouts in order that they might readily be gathered together at night, it being considered vitally important to keep this unit together and to establish a permanent hospital at the earliest possible moment. Eventually the Bellevue Building, in use as an officers' club house, which was large and roomy and near the center of the city, was turned over to the Medical Department. This building was found to be in very bad condition, not a door or window remaining, and with water and ice covering the floors in every room. Its appearance was so discouraging and its rehabilitation apparently so hopeless that under ordinary circumstances it would have been at once abandoned, but by 12.30 o'clock on that first day Major Giddings with his quartermasters' contingent, ably assisted by some fifty of the crew of the United States training ship "Old Colony," — who had arrived with instructions to report to the head of the Committee for such services as they could render, — together with a contingent of Canadian soldiers under command of General Benson, was at work cleaning the rooms, covering the windows with papers and boards, washing the floors and woodwork, and removing all furniture to the upper part of the building. The result was that by 6 o'clock that night an operating room was installed and wards fitted up with one hundred beds and medical supplies brought from the relief train. By 9 o'clock sixty patients were received; and by noon the next day the fully equipped American Bellevue Hospital, flying the American Flag presented by Mr. Ratshesky, was in complete running order and caring for one hundred patients. This was not the only hospital in the city, but it received the worst cases from other hospitals when the latter became so overcrowded that proper attention could not be given to the patients. The Military Camp Hill Hospital, its original capacity limited to three hundred patients, was at that time caring for approximately sixteen hundred.

The British Medical Stores Depot furnished full equipment in the way of bedside tables, rubber sheets, dishes and tableware. The British authorities also furnished to the hospital unit cooks and kitchen utensils, besides supplying the hospital with food from its commissary and detailing a corps of trained clerks and orderlies.

Premier Borden personally made arrangements for the housing of the doctors and officials, and likewise took care of the Red Cross Contingent and the newspaper men, while the nurses were quartered in private homes in the vicinity, — four of them at Government House.

The ten surgeons of the Medical Department of the Massachusetts State Guard had with them a civilian anæsthetist, two officers of the Quartermaster Corps detailed to the Medical Department, and ten civilian nurses, all a part of the Massachusetts contingent, and these were the first medical outfit to reach Halifax from any outside section.

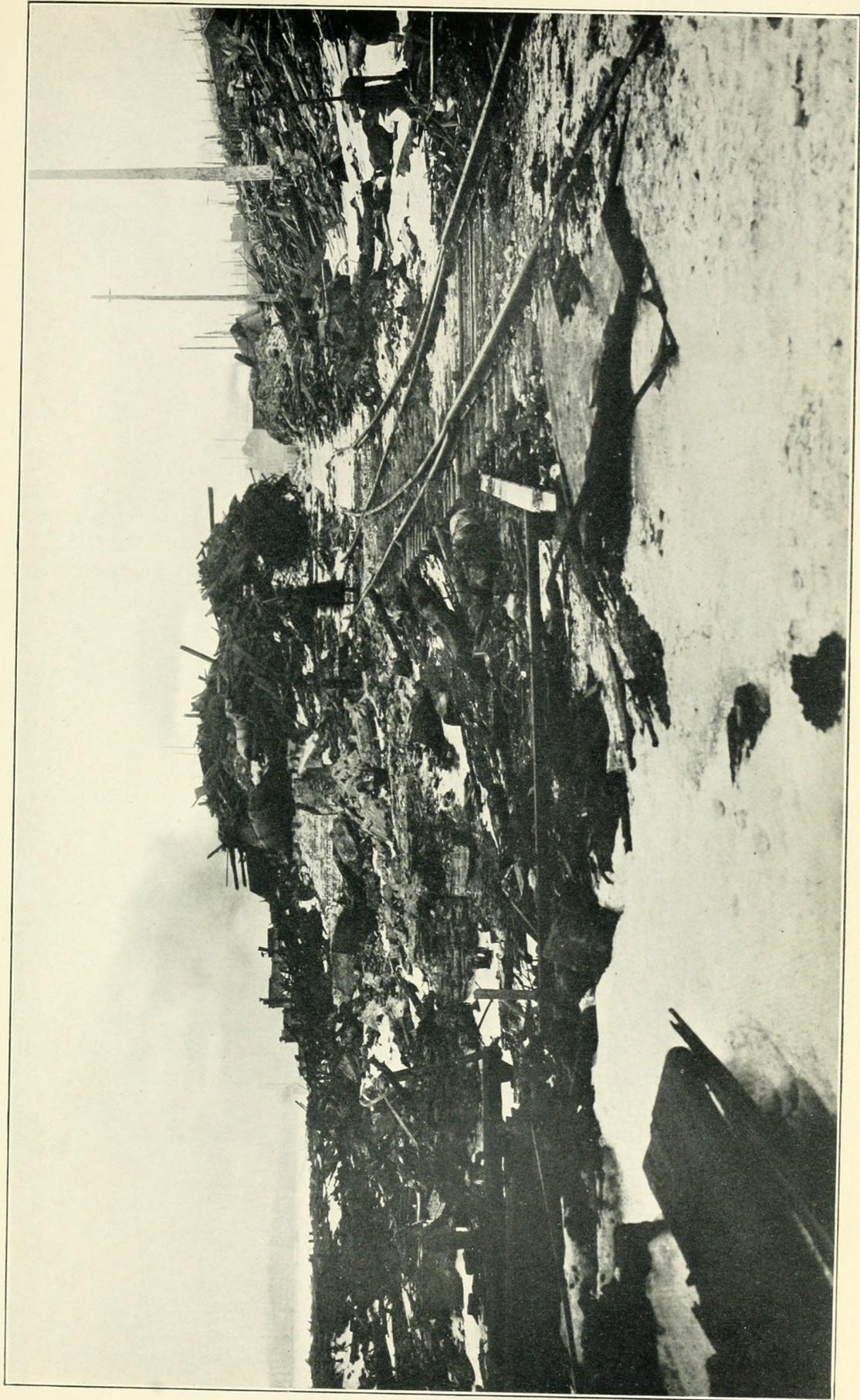
Part of the equipment of a portable hospital was also taken to Halifax and used to excellent advantage. When the Committee left for home all the medical equipment brought and not used, with the exception of a few blankets, was left behind for the sick and wounded.

The afternoon on which formal possession was taken of the hospital, Premier Borden issued the following statement: —

This afternoon I visited the hospital established at Bellevue by the Massachusetts Hospital Unit. They took possession yesterday afternoon at 2 o'clock, and within a few hours had every arrangement made for receiving patients, of whom nearly seventy-five are now being accommodated. All the arrangements were wonderfully planned considering the shortness of the time and difficulties that had to be overcome. The hospital is a triumph of organizing ability.

In a report made by Major Giddings to the Acting Surgeon-General the following excerpts appear: —

On the evening of December 9 the commanding officer attended by request a meeting of Red Cross representatives, Lieut.-Col. F. McKelvie Bell, Mr. Ratshesky and representatives of the Boston Red Cross Unit, which, with the independent contingent of Dr. E. A. Codman, had reached



Halifax that morning. Dr. Codman was also present at this conference. That day a Medical Relief Committee had been appointed, with Lieut.-Col. F. McK. Bell as chairman. Among other things discussed at the meeting were ways and means of best caring for the sick and wounded of the city. As a result of observations made on the 8th by various members of this unit, who had visited many people in their homes, we were able to suggest the mapping of the city into districts, with the recommendation that a house to house canvass be made first by the social workers, who would report as to whether medical or surgical help was needed, the case then to be seen by a doctor or nurse. This suggestion was made because our doctors found that large numbers of injured people requiring surgical aid had sought the shelter of buildings near the devastated area, where they were content to stay. So dazed were they by the disaster that they did not realize that help would come to them for the asking. Also the members of our staff had found that many people could not leave their places of refuge for dressings because they had literally lost all their clothing.

Another observation made by our doctors was that contagious diseases would be likely to make an early appearance, due to the complete destruction of toilet facilities, the huddling together of large numbers in small quarters and the general physical demoralization. Because of these conditions we recommended the immediate establishment of a contagious hospital. That our surmise of early contagion was correct was proved by the fact that on December 12 three cases of throat infection, cultures of which immediately were made, were proved to be diphtheritic.

Our suggestions, as above indicated, were both accepted, the house to house canvass being made by members of the United States medical units, which went to the aid of the city between the time of their arrival in the city and the establishment of their respective hospitals. While doing this work their headquarters were at City Hall.

The morning of December 10 saw the Stars and Stripes flying over the hospital, the first time they had appeared in the city following the disaster. The flag was secured for us by Mr. Ratshesky. . . .

On this same day we received an official visit from Samuel Wolcott and R. W. E. Ladd, the respective civil and medical heads of the Massachusetts Red Cross Unit, who were establishing a hospital and were anxious to learn how we had proceeded. . . .

On the afternoon of December 11 the volume of work had become so great that additional nurses were required. We notified medical headquarters of this fact, and they detailed to us the following ladies, all from St. John, and all, with one exception, graduate nurses: Miss Chambers of St. Luke's Hospital, New York; Miss Phillips, V. A. D., two years, England; Miss Donville, Newport Hospital, Rhode Island; Miss Harrington, Newport Hospital, Rhode Island; Mrs. Tilley, Royal Victoria Hos-

pital, Montreal; Mrs. Allison, Newton Hospital, Newton; Mrs. Bowman, Waltham Hospital, Waltham; Mrs. Davidson and Mrs. Brock, Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal; and Mrs. McIntyre, Massachusetts General Hospital, Massachusetts. These ladies remained with us until we surrendered control of the hospital, and did very valuable work. . . .

On the 11th Mrs. Barrett Wendell arrived from Boston, who brought a considerable quantity of clothing for distribution and certain needed hospital supplies, the gift of Mrs. Charles D. Sias of Boston.

In addition to the Massachusetts and Rhode Island divisions of the Red Cross, and the physicians who had come independently, a number of doctors and nurses arrived from Maine ready to establish a hospital, so that a superabundance of ready professional help resulted. Therefore, after a general conference, at 7 o'clock on the evening of December 12, the Bellevue Hospital was transferred to the Rhode Island contingent.

Respecting the general character of the wounds treated at the hospital, Dr. Giddings reports in part as follows:—

They were very largely injuries of the face caused by flying glass, and included many injuries to the eyes. In fact, there were more of these than of any others. The explanation of this is as follows: Two explosions occurred. One was a comparatively minor affair, but was sufficiently severe to bring people to their windows to see what had happened; then came the terrific explosion which razed the city and created so much havoc. It was at this time that so many people were injured by the glass.

A number of cases of insanity were reported following the disaster, but at Bellevue we had only one such. This was a woman who finally created so much disturbance that it became necessary to transfer her to the hospital for insane across the harbor, at Dartmouth. Cases of mild shell shock, while not officially appearing on the hospital records, were not infrequent.

Many people came to the hospital simply for a roof to cover them, rather than to obtain treatment.

The work of every member of the Halifax contingent, under the leadership of Mr. Ratshesky, cannot be given too high praise; yet it should be stated that the services rendered by Captain Loring were probably more specifically exacting than any other. This was due to the multiplicity of injuries to the eye, which called him to constant service between

Bellevue, the Military Hospital, the Halifax Infirmary and the Camp Hill Hospital.

Mr. MacIlreith, chairman of the Relief Committee, addressed the following letter to Major Giddings:—

HALIFAX, N. S., December 13, 1917.

DEAR MAJOR GIDDINGS:— At a meeting of the Executive of the Relief Committee, held this afternoon, it was the earnest desire of all the members that before the Medical Corps of the State of Massachusetts took its departure from Halifax a formal minute should be placed on our records, which in the future will be the basis of the official history of the Halifax disaster, expressing the Committee's deep appreciation of the prompt and humane action of the authorities in Boston in despatching your corps to Halifax, and of the professional efficiency and noble spirit which you and all members of your unit have exhibited since coming to our stricken city. We shall always bear you in grateful remembrance, and wish you a safe journey home.

Yours truly,

R. T. MACILREITH,  
*Chairman, Relief Committee.*

The accompanying figures will give some idea of the amount of medical and surgical services rendered in this short period:—

Total out-patients treated, . . . . .	167
Visits in homes, . . . . .	53
Hours spent in advisory capacity, . . . . .	23
Combined surgical and medical service:—	
Total house admissions, . . . . .	75
Total operations done (exclusive of eye service), . . . . .	10
Total discharges, . . . . .	17
Total ethers, . . . . .	46
Total ether used (pounds), . . . . .	3½
Total cases turned over to Rhode Island Unit, . . . . .	58
Eye service, Dr. Loring:—	
Total cases seen at Bellevue, . . . . .	27
Total cases seen at Cogswell Street Military Hospital, . . . . .	85
Total cases seen at Halifax Infirmary, . . . . .	10
	— 122
Total operations at Bellevue, . . . . .	18
Total operations at Cogswell Street Military Hospital, . . . . .	15
Total operations at Halifax Infirmary, . . . . .	2
	— 35

The above list does not include a great many patients who were treated at the hospital, and in regard to whom no clinical records were kept.

The immediate results of the catastrophe were 1,800 lives lost; 10,000 people injured, many mortally, others to a less degree, though all in need of medical attendance; 2,500 homes entirely destroyed, together with ruined churches, schools, hospitals, asylums, public buildings, factories and warehouses. There was, in fact, scarcely a building that escaped without some damage, and all glass throughout the greater part of the city was shattered. The financial loss exceeded \$30,000,000.

On Friday, January 4, 1918, a second visiting committee, comprising Henry B. Endicott, chairman, James J. Phelan, vice-chairman, Robert Winsor, treasurer, A. C. Ratschesky and Joseph B. Russell, left for Halifax. On their arrival Sunday, January 6, the Committee immediately met with the Executive Committee of the Halifax Relief Committee, and did not adjourn until late the same night, to come together again early the following morning. Many propositions were brought forward at this meeting relating to the administration of the fund in the Committee's possession and the best use to which it could be put.

Meanwhile it was concluded by the Massachusetts contingent that the most satisfactory results would be obtained by buying furniture for those families who had lost in whole or in part their household equipment, thus re-establishing as far as possible their home life. This plan coincided with the views of the Halifax Committee, and the following Halifax men and women were appointed to represent Massachusetts at Halifax in the disbursement of the fund: —

G. F. Pearson, *Chairman*.

A. D. MacRae, *Secretary*.

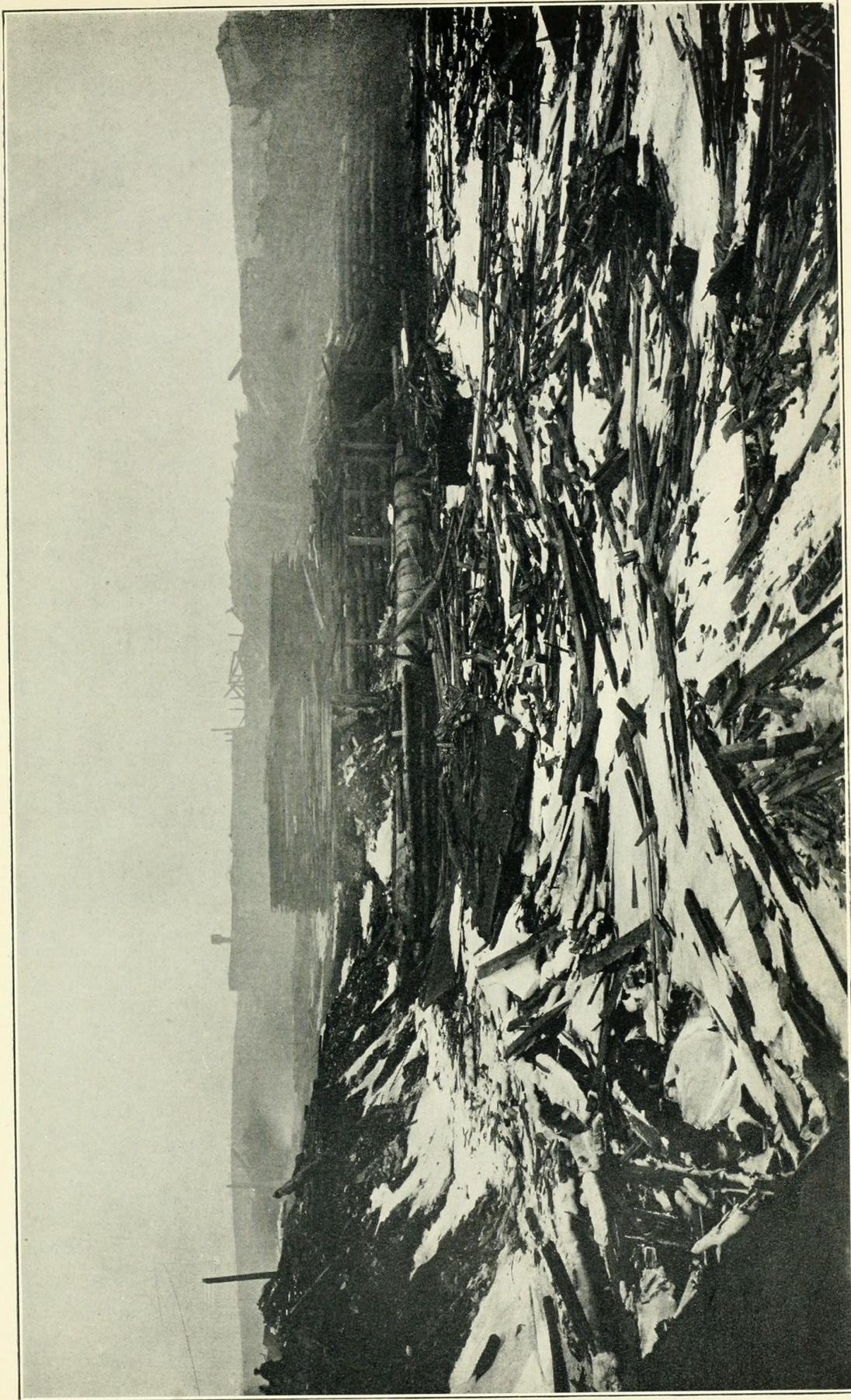
Mrs. G. S. Campbell.

Mrs. J. Norwood Duffus.

R. T. MacIlreith.

H. R. Silver.

W. R. Powell.



It was agreed by both Committees that in a general way this fund should be expended in behalf of those who had wholly or partially lost their furniture and were unable of themselves to make good their losses, and that they should have their homes refurnished on the basis of what they had lost. For this purpose \$500,000 was set aside; yet, as it proved later, only one-half of this amount was required. The outlay originally judged necessary had been based partly on the prices obtaining at Halifax, but when the Committee returned home they were able to get bottom prices, and, in addition, the Canadian authorities remitted all duties on relief goods crossing the border. It was generally acknowledged by the recipients and by the Halifax Committee that the furniture was of superior quality to what those receiving it had originally possessed. The difference between what was paid here and the cost of the same goods at Halifax amounted to about \$300,000.

The necessity of caring in the future for many cases of actual and threatened blindness resulting from the calamity was brought to the attention of the Committee by Sir Frederick Fraser. In compliance with his views an additional allowance of \$25,000 was made for the immediate care and education of these special cases, and the best advice possible was sought for the supervision of its expenditure.

The Halifax branch of the Massachusetts Halifax Relief Committee was also empowered to spend a limited amount of money in all cases where prompt action was necessary, after a majority vote and with the written approval of at least three members of its Committee. This rule was to apply also to all requisitions upon the Boston Committee for materials of any sort.

Subsequent to the return from Halifax of the second visiting committee, the Massachusetts Halifax Relief Committee in Boston, together with its Halifax branch, worked to organize and carry out the general plans of relief so far as they came within the scope of the subscribed fund.

On June 24, 1918, the Massachusetts Committee met at the State House to discuss more particularly the questions of tuberculosis and the blind in Halifax, and it was voted to ask Mr. James Jackson of the Red Cross to obtain an expert from the Rockefeller Foundation, who should investigate and report to the Committee what the conditions were in these respects.

As a result of this vote Dr. Victor G. Heiser, director for the East of the Rockefeller Foundation, International Health Board, New York City, met the Committee at the State House on June 9, and later went at their request to Halifax to investigate the whole question of tuberculosis and blindness as it there existed, especially so far as chargeable to the disaster. Dr. Heiser, realizing that the vital principle governing convalescence would be the hygienic conditions pertaining throughout the city, and in conjunction with the Halifax branch of the Massachusetts Relief Committee, by whom he was provided with every facility, made an independent and exhaustive investigation of public health conditions in the city, and submitted to the Committee at Boston his report of a constructive health program for Halifax. His recommendations were strongly endorsed by the members of the Halifax branch in a report made by them under date of August 13, 1918, as being directly in the interest of those who had suffered or might suffer from the effects of the disaster; and it was further advised that Dr. Heiser's suggestions be carried out. Under date of November 5 Mr. Pearson, chairman of the Halifax branch, sent the following letter to Mr. Endicott: —

The undersigned has the honor, by direction of the Massachusetts Halifax Relief Committee, Halifax branch, to report as follows: —

Your Halifax Committee is of opinion, as you have been previously advised both by written and verbal reports, that the rehabilitation of the people of Halifax and Dartmouth, following the explosion of December 6, 1917, resolved itself into the following phases, viz.: —

1. The provision of immediate relief in the way of medical attendance, medical supplies, food, clothing, building materials and means of transportation. Before the appointment of this Committee, and under your

direction, the people of Massachusetts had made instant and most valuable contributions to this phase.

2. The provision of temporary dwellings, and the making of the same habitable by the provision of household furnishings. The temporary dwellings have been provided by the Halifax Relief Commission. This Committee, under your instructions, devoted itself to the provision of household furnishings for those persons who had lost their furniture in the explosion and were, wholly or partially, unable to replace it themselves. What has been accomplished along this line has been fully reported to you, but generally it may be said that when the applications on hand are dealt with and furniture delivered, approximately 1,800 families will have received gifts of furnishings from this Committee, involving an expenditure of approximately \$200,000. Because of the favorable prices obtained from the manufacturers of Massachusetts, the remission of Canadian duties by the Dominion government, and the advantage taken of lowest transportation rates, goods of a similar nature purchased in the Halifax market at this time would have cost, in the opinion of this Committee, practically three times as much. When the applications in hand for gifts of furnishings have all been dealt with, in the judgment of this Committee, all necessitous persons in the city of Halifax who suffered loss of furnishings by reason of the explosion, and who have applied to this Committee, will have been cared for either through the instrumentality of this Committee, by the Halifax Relief Commission or by co-operation of both of these bodies.

3. The provision of permanent homes for those whose homes were destroyed on December 6 last. This work is properly the duty of the Halifax Relief Commission, which has embarked on an extensive policy of rebuilding homes or providing compensation for those whose homes were destroyed.

4. The care of the blind and the provision of pensions for those whose earning capacity has been impaired by physical disability incident upon the explosion. To the care of the blind the Massachusetts Halifax Relief Committee has already appropriated the sum of \$25,000, which will be used in conjunction with other funds provided from other sources to carry out a policy now in course of preparation with respect to those blinded by the disaster. The provision of pensions or disability allowances comes properly within the scope of the Halifax Relief Commission, which has a settled policy in this regard and is adjusting and paying all claims of this character.

5. The readjustment and improvement of the public health conditions of the city, which were seriously impaired as a result of the disaster. Your Halifax Committee is seriously apprehensive of the damage done to the health of this community following the explosion. Exposure, privation and overcrowding during the severe and inclement weather following the

6th of December, undoubtedly, in the opinion of all competent judges, has left its mark upon the general health of this community. This fact is so exhaustively dealt with in the letters accompanying this report that it is unnecessary to go into it at length here. These facts also have been the subject of other reports, verbal and written, with the result that upon our recommendation that you send an expert to this city to study the subject, you sent to this city Dr. Victor G. Heiser of the Rockefeller Foundation, New York City. When Dr. Heiser came to Halifax, your Committee was glad to be able to provide him with all facilities required by him for the purpose of making an independent and impartial investigation into public health conditions in this city and Dartmouth. Dr. Heiser consulted with everybody in authority having to deal with any branch of the public health of this city. His report, which you forwarded to this Committee, has been given most careful consideration, and this Committee is unanimously of the opinion that it is distinctly to the interest of this city and of the citizens generally that the recommendations made by Dr. Heiser should be carried out. This Committee believes that such a policy would be the capstone to the splendid efforts the people of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts have made for the relief of our city. The opinion of this Committee in this regard is endorsed by: —

His Worship the Mayor and the Board of Control, representing the citizens of Halifax.

The president and council of the Board of Trade, representing the business life of the city and embracing seven hundred members.

The president and members of the Commercial Club, also representing the business life of this community and embracing four hundred members.

The president and members of the Rotary Club, representative of the business and professional life of this city and embracing one hundred and fifty members.

The president and members of the Halifax Medical Association, representative of the medical profession of this city.

The president and members of the Halifax Anti-Tuberculosis League.

The president and members of the Victorian Order of Nurses.

The chairman and members of the City Board of Health.

Dr. W. H. Hattie, Provincial Health Officer.

The Halifax Relief Commission, who will co-operate in carrying out such policy.

The undersigned begs to attach hereto the endorsements in writing of the various bodies above referred to.

Your Halifax Committee, therefore, begs respectfully to recommend that, generally, the recommendation of Dr. Victor G. Heiser, contained in a report to you under date of August 13, 1918, be carried out. If this

policy be determined upon by your Committee, your Halifax Committee will be glad, if required, to make detailed suggestions with respect to the organization and personnel of a committee to carry the recommendations into effect.

The opportunity to permanently help those stricken or threatened with blindness or tuberculosis as a result of the explosion was at once recognized as a part of the obligation resting on the Committee, and one due to those citizens who made possible the immediate relief and had committed themselves to rehabilitation. Therefore on November 15, at a meeting of the Committee, it was voted as follows:—

*Voted,* That the treasurer be and he is hereby authorized to expend for the rehabilitation of the city of Halifax the sum of \$50,000 a year for the period of five years beginning with the year 1919, such sums to be used for the restoration and improvement of the sanitary conditions of the city and the health of its inhabitants, in accordance with a general plan outlined in a report prepared for the Committee by Dr. Victor G. Heiser of the Rockefeller Foundation, dated July 25, 1918, and in a further letter from Dr. Heiser to this Committee, dated August 13, 1918, and also in a letter from G. Fred Pearson, Esq., chairman of the Halifax branch, Massachusetts Halifax Relief Committee, to the chairman of this Committee, dated October 11, 1918. This report and these letters shall be annexed to this vote and made a part hereof for the purposes of setting forth in detail the purposes for which the money appropriated by this vote shall be expended. This appropriation is made and the authority of the treasurer to expend the sums of money above set forth is given upon the following conditions, and no expenditure or payment shall be made by the treasurer unless and until such conditions shall be duly fulfilled:—

1. The city of Halifax shall establish by incorporation or otherwise a commission,<sup>1</sup> corporation, or other public agency, which shall be responsible for the receipt and disbursement of the moneys which may be paid to it during the period of five years by the treasurer of this Committee, and which shall further undertake and be responsible for the formation of a definite program for the rehabilitation of the city of Halifax in accordance with the report and letter of Dr. Heiser and letter of Mr. Pearson. The chairman and treasurer are hereby authorized on behalf of this Committee to approve the form of public agency which shall be created by the city of Halifax for this purpose, and are further authorized to enter into

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix for act, p. 554.

any contract on behalf of this Committee with the city of Halifax, or such public agency as may be necessary, to satisfy themselves that the money paid by the treasurer through such period of five years shall be disbursed for the purpose of rehabilitation in accordance with the plans described in the report and letters above referred to.

2. The treasurer, at such time or times as in his discretion he may deem advisable, may employ experts in accounting, municipal sanitation, public hygiene, or other kindred subjects, to examine the books and actions of the public agency having charge of the disbursement of the funds appropriated by this Committee, and if as a result of the report or reports of such experts he is of the opinion that the moneys or any part thereof have not been disbursed by such public agency in accordance with this vote, or are not being used for the purpose above set forth, he shall make no further expenditures or payments under the authority of this vote without further vote of this Committee.

3. No payments shall be made in any year during the period of five years by the treasurer to the city of Halifax or the public agency above referred to until he is satisfied that there has been paid or will be paid in the same year to the city of Halifax or to such public agency the sum of \$15,000 by the Canadian government Halifax Relief Committee, and the sum of \$10,000 by the Province of Nova Scotia and the city of Halifax, which sums shall be applicable for disbursement by said public agency for the purpose set forth in the report and letters above referred to, and shall actually be applied and disbursed for such purpose.

4. The expenses incurred by the treasurer for the reports of the expert above referred to, and any other expenses incurred by him for the purpose of satisfying himself from time to time that the conditions set forth in this vote have been fulfilled, including counsel fees, may be paid by him from the annual appropriations of \$50,000 above referred to, and in the event of such expenses being incurred by him he may pay over to the city of Halifax or the public agency appointed to receive and disburse the sum only the balance of such annual appropriations of \$50,000.

5. Subject to the conditions above set forth, and upon the fulfillment thereof, the treasurer shall annually during said period of five years pay the sum of \$50,000, or such balance as shall remain after the payments referred to in the previous paragraph, in one sum or in such instalments as in his discretion he shall deem wise, to the city of Halifax or the public agency above described, to be disbursed by it for the rehabilitation of the city in accordance with the plans described in the report and in the letters of Dr. Heiser and Mr. Pearson, and the receipt of the city of Halifax or of such public agency for sums received by it from the treasurer of this Committee shall discharge the treasurer from any liability of any character whatsoever for the application of the moneys so paid by him.

This action on the part of the Committee was immediately made public, in order that the Commonwealth might know of the assistance which her generous gifts were still rendering in behalf of a friendly neighbor, now our Ally in the Great War.

The above vote, based on the recommendations of Dr. Heiser, constituted a well thought out plan for a constructive health program extending over five years, and was designed to make good, in a permanent way, the health damage caused by the explosion, the annual expense of which was to be shared as follows: —

Massachusetts Halifax Relief Committee, . . . . .	\$50,000
Canadian government Halifax Relief Commission, . . . . .	15,000
Province of Nova Scotia and the city of Halifax, at least, . . . . .	10,000
	<hr/>
	\$75,000

At the request of the Red Cross several of their representatives accompanied the first relief train to Halifax. Their work, helpful throughout, proved to be of incalculable assistance to the Committee. Mr. Endicott wrote: —

The aid that the Red Cross has given to the Committee in this emergency cannot be overestimated, and they have certainly demonstrated that they possess an organization which, when it is called upon in an emergency, can and will respond promptly and nobly.

It must be borne in mind that the Halifax Relief Committee was financed neither from the Committee on Public Safety's fund of \$100,000 given by a generous citizenship, nor from the \$1,000,000 appropriation of the Legislature, but through a special popular subscription given in behalf of a stricken neighbor. Although the work of rehabilitation will continue for some years to come, and remain within the control of the branch of the Massachusetts Committee at Halifax, its relation to the Massachusetts Committee on Public Safety ceased at the time the latter was dissolved, in November, 1918.

MASSACHUSETTS HALIFAX RELIEF FUND, JULY 1, 1919

*Treasurer's Statement*

Total subscriptions, . . . . .	\$699,189 91	
Rebates on bills, . . . . .	192 36	
Interest on deposit, . . . . .	17,095 35	
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Total receipts, . . . . .		\$716,477 62
Expenditures for: —		
Clothing, . . . . .	\$32,214 55	
Material, . . . . .	23,167 36	
Furniture, . . . . .	261,702 29	
Supplies, . . . . .	40,369 64	
Other essentials, . . . . .	95,164 95	
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Total expenditures, . . . . .		452,618 79
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Balance on hand, . . . . .		\$263,858 83
On deposit as follows: —		
Shawmut Bank, . . . . .		\$161,180 84
United States Trust Company, . . . . .		102,677 99
		<hr/>
		\$263,858 83