

Chilean Tragedy

In Chile I found great tragedy. I visited the Minister of the Interior, who is in charge of the relief measures. He told me they had over 500,000 people homeless in the stricken area, and with winter coming on and the season of heavy rain the whole situation is very serious for them. I also visited the Minister of Finance and the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs. It will cost at least half a billion dollars to repair the damage that has been done. Roads have been destroyed. Homes, public buildings, wharves and harbours have been destroyed. They do not know what has happened to the harbours. Much of the shoreline in that part of Chile has been changed. New islands have come up out of the sea and old islands have been submerged. There are also four new volcanoes.

All this has happened in one of the country's very best regions, a district where they have their only steel plant and their only pulp and paper plant. People in the capital of Santiago could not get word of what had happened to their relatives in the earthquake zone. People were sitting outside the office of the Minister of the Interior trying to find out something about their relatives. We saw quite a few trucks heading south with bedding and all sorts of materials for the people there. On the airfield at Santiago there were huge United States "Globemasters". The United States at once flew two large mobile hospitals to Chile, these hospitals having over 250 beds each. Not only did I see "Globemasters" at Santiago, but there was also another at Antofagasta on my way north and at Lima, Peru, there were two or three more. From all over the world help was coming for these people.

The people of Chile have shown remarkable courage. The Ministers were under terrific pressure, of course, and had been working day and night. Disaster struck the country just when it was recovering from a very difficult period economically. They do not know how they will bring about rehabilitation under these conditions. This is the worst disaster they have ever suffered but I am sure that every Canadian, if he could be there, would admire the way in which the people of Chile are facing this tragedy.

Last Saturday night, I believe, 10 cases of clothing were shipped from Vancouver by the Canadian Red Cross through the courtesy of Canadian Pacific Airlines. Forty-eight cases of new, not used, clothing as well as medicines have also been sent to Chile by our Red Cross.

One of the most urgent requirements was for mobile hospitals of a smaller size. The large United States mobile hospitals were very helpful but it was difficult to get the injured people to the large centres. So the Chilean Minister of the Interior asked if we could send a small mobile field hospital. Through the co-operation of the Departments of National Defence and National Health and Welfare complete medical equipment for a 30-bed field hospital, together with