

Work of Belgian Relief Commission

Statement by Central Executive Committee, 59 St. Peter St., Montreal.

THIS Commission was entirely American at the start, but representatives of Italy and Spain have joined. The management of the Commission is in hands of American citizens.

Agencies have been opened: (1) in New York, with object of gathering the purchases and donations in America; and (2) in Rotterdam, with object of distributing the goods in Belgium.

On November 21st, 14,150 tons of foodstuffs had crossed the Belgian frontier for distribution in Belgium. These goods were mainly: 8,200 tons of wheat, 740 tons of flour, 1,000 tons of rice, 360 tons of beans and peas, the balance miscellaneous.

On November 23rd the relief work disposed in Rotterdam of 32,000 tons of foodstuffs, including 6,000 tons of salt bought in Rotterdam, and about 10,000 tons of wheat, which was the wheat evacuated from Antwerp to Holland by the Belgian Government before the German troops entered Antwerp, the balance of 16,000 tons had come from London or from America.

Donations promised on 23rd of November: (1) 12 steamerloads containing donations from United States and Canada, of which the total tonnage is 60,000 tons; (2) besides 18 steamerloads of a total tonnage of about 86,000 tons of foodstuffs coming from the United States, Canada and Spain were promised.

It must be noted that the bulk of the donations coming from the United States and Canada cannot reach Belgium before January. From January, the Commission hopes to be able to introduce in Belgium 90,000 tons of cereals monthly, which are all needed.

Food Department.

The Central Committee, which has been constituted with the object of helping the poor population of Brussels, has extended its work to the whole of Belgium. For this purpose, it has organized two departments: Food Department and Relief Department.

For this Department the Commission was to obtain from the German authorities, through the Ministers of the United States and of Spain, formal guarantee that the goods imported by the Committee would not be seized. These guarantees have been obtained. It was also to organize the purchasing of goods in foreign countries, to import them in Belgium and distribute them in the provinces.

German Requisitions.

The Committee has requested the Ministers of the United States and Spain to negotiate from the German authorities the cessation of the requisitions of foodstuffs still remaining in Belgium, or at least the limitation of these requisitions. Partial agreement has already been made with the German authorities for this, in consequence of which the Committee has been able to purchase in the Province of Brabant quantities of wheat which have been employed to feed the population of Brussels. In Hainaut, the German authorities have reserved zones in which they will make no requisitions. A similar agreement for the province of Namur is being negotiated.

Transportation in Belgium.

The transportation of the goods in the different points in Belgium is a very difficult problem. The central Committee has requested the American and Spanish Ministers to negotiate with the German authorities for transportation over the railways and the canals.

Relief Department.

For the distribution of the goods the Central Committee has requested the provincial sub-committees to distribute no money, but to organize the distribution in agreement with the communal authorities who pay part of the expenses.

Hereafter is a telegram dated at Rotterdam, addressed by Captain Lucey to Herbert Hoover, President of the Relief Committee:

"As previously advised, have had unusually severe weather last two weeks,