

DISTRIBUTION OF CANADIAN SCHOOL SUPPLIES IN GREECE

Schoolchildren in Northwestern Greece were surprised last November by the arrival of a Canadian couple, Mr. H. W. Richardson, Commercial Secretary at the Canadian Embassy in Athens, and Mrs. Richardson, bringing them pencils and scribblers from Canada. The unconcealed gratitude of the Greek children left no doubt that this gift of a number of Canadians was greatly appreciated and met a real need.

This project had its origin in a report from the Canadian Ambassador in Athens, Mr. George L. Magann, describing the desperate conditions in schools in those districts of Greece that had suffered most in the Second World War and in the subsequent guerilla fighting. This information was passed on to the Canadian Teachers' Federation, with the Ambassador's recommendation that the children most urgently needed pencils and scribblers. The response was quick and sympathetic. Teachers across Canada, with the approval of local school authorities, organized an appeal for contributions. On the assumption of its success the Federation ordered 10,000 pencils and an equal number of specially designed, extra-thick scribblers, on the covers of which was to be stated in Greek that they were a gift from Canadian schoolchildren.

In order to make the project as meaningful as possible to the children being asked to contribute, the Federation decided to limit the appeal to a representative selection of schools in all provinces. Teachers and children were asked to give a total of \$1,500, cost of the pencils and scribblers ordered. But their generosity had been underestimated — the Federation received over \$7,000 — enough, under bulk-purchasing arrangements, for ten times the original quantity ordered. The Canadian Teachers' Federation asked the Unitarian Service Committee of Canada to buy 100,000 additional scribblers and several hundred thousand pencils with the extra money obtained. These will form a second shipment which will be distributed in 1953 among Greek children in other schools.

Distribution Arrangements

The Unitarian Service Committee of Canada arranged the free shipment of these materials to Greece, where their distribution was taken in hand by the Canadian Embassy with the assistance of the Near East Foundation, a non-denominational United States relief agency that represents the Unitarian Service Committee in Greece. It was decided that the supplies should be handed out personally by Mr. and Mrs. Richardson — the latter a member of the Advisory Committee for the Unitarian Service Committee in Greece — accompanied by Mr. B. Lezos, field representative of the Advisory Committee. Mrs. Richardson's account of this experience is printed in full below:

The distribution of school supplies contributed by the Canadian Teachers' Federation took us to Northwest Greece by the winding road over the Bralos pass and through the towns of Kozani, Grevena, Castoria and Florina, to the small villages in their environs, some of which are on the very borders of Albania and Yugoslavia.

Most of the villages we visited consist of mud-brick houses with red tile roofs, dreary and poor-looking. Others, sadder still, consist of plastered mud-huts with thatched roofs. They have no electricity — indeed no one could afford it were it made available — and, more often than not, the school is the only reasonably well constructed building. Thanks to the Queen's Fund, over 450 new schoolhouses have been built since the beginning of the war — a remarkable achievement in any country. Constructed of a standard type regardless of size, the buildings are made of stone, with ample window space and a small annex in which to house the teacher. They are a tremendous improvement on the old buildings, which are small, cramped, dark and draughty, and frequently lack any arrangements for heating.