

CHAIRMAN ROGERS

Of Relief Commission appeals for united action in assisting in the housing problem.

Reconstruction forces to be withdrawn as far as possible from districts south of Cornwallis and Jacob streets.

Large increase for labor and material since estimates were made.

The following statement has been issued by Chairman Rogers of the Relief Commission :

The Commission made a formal statement to the City Council in the Spring in which it was suggested that probably a thousand new houses would have to be built, but it was added that such a programme could not possibly be overtaken in one season. It was thought, however, that probably four hundred could be built and that in addition a large number of badly damaged houses which were uninhabitable could be made ready for occupation. It was impossible then to anticipate that so many houses would require extensive repairs before they could be occupied nor was it possible to anticipate that labour would be so scarce or that many classes of material would be so difficult to obtain. Notwithstanding all these troubles we believe that our programme can yet be very largely overtaken before the winter closes in upon us. The vital matter however is the mobilization of all labour for the one great problem of rehousing, but to effect this mobilization the united action of property owners, contractors, craftsmen and workmen of all classes is essential. Not only so, but the united sentiment, and influence of the whole community must be directed to this one pressing problem. The events of December 6th must not be forgotten. The work of relief is not by any means accomplished. People who suffered and who are yet without homes must have so far as humanly possible comfortable housing for the coming winter. The Reconstruction Department has been directed to devote its energies only to houses which are uninhabitable unless repaired. The efforts of all contractors so far as the Commission can influence them, are being also so directed. People who can occupy their dwellings must put up with broken plaster and non-essential repairs so as to relieve labour for the North End districts of the City and Dartmouth. Churches, institutions, clubs, societies, business houses and other classes of property owners both in Halifax and Dartmouth are urgently requested to desist from the employment of labour which should be used to relieve continuing distress and discomfort on the part of victims of the disaster. Labour and its organizations can, we feel sure, be depended upon to second the efforts of the Commission. Probably ninety per cent of the housing being undertaken is for the benefit of the craftsmen and workmen of the city and in our work is involved, we hope, a better class of housing for the workmen and at reasonable rentals. The Commission therefore is entitled to the co-operation of labour and feels that it will have it.

The Commission, many weeks ago, determined that the wisest course to follow in order to meet the situation as well as possible was to proceed with the construction of a large number of dwellings on its own account rather than to undertake to deal with a like number of individual houses. This accounts for the comparatively small progress on the Richmond slope. To deal individually with each owner in that locality was found to be a slow and tedious process and the policy we have adopted was forced upon us in the interests of the greatest number. Our construction staffs are still of the opinion that if the working forces of the community are directed to housing and housing only there will be ready for occupation by the time severe weather is upon us sufficient comfortable homes to meet the pressing cases of all former house owners for the winter. Many of these people will not be occupying their own homes but they will be much more comfortable than they now are in the temporary houses or in other makeshift homes. The construction of upwards of three hundred hydrostone houses will be well under way in a week and these along with the new frame houses and the repaired houses will meet the situation as well as any one could have anticipated last winter.

The Reconstruction forces have been directed to withdraw all their workmen as far as possible from the district of the city south of Jacob and Cogswell Streets and owners in Wards 1, 2 and 3 will have to apply to the Appraisal Board for adjustments and attend to their own work. Repair jobs now being undertaken in that district, comparatively few in number, will be completed if it is necessary in order to make houses habitable. Otherwise owners are notified that more pressing work in the North End must be first attended to. Likewise in the Northern wards consideration of houses that are now habitable must not be urged upon the Reconstruction Department.

The owners of houses not occupied by themselves which are being repaired at the expense of the Commission are being notified that these houses must be at the disposal of their former tenants, and unless for good cause shown at the same rental. Relief moneys in these cases are being expended not only for the benefit of the owner but for the benefit of the tenants driven out by the disaster and these tenants and former home owners whose houses have not yet been re-

stored must have the first right to occupy dwellings on which relief money has been spent. The Commission feels that this policy is now being largely voluntarily carried out and that former tenants are being restored. In cases where it is not being carried out, and the attention of the Commission is called to it, repairs will be discontinued or progress payments refused.

It is due to the public to inform it that a recent survey of the work yet to be done shows that the estimates made for the Commission in mid-winter were far too low. The extent of the injury to buildings it was impossible then to ascertain. Then there has been largely increased labour and material costs. The relief funds therefore at the disposal of the Commission will not extend as far as it was hoped. It is important therefore again to ask those who are able to bear the burden of repair not to seek aid from the relief moneys. The Commission regretfully has had to decline assistance to many societies and other organizations as well as to companies and business men and others who cannot be regarded as being in the same class as home owners.

In a few cases people who should never have pressed their claims upon the Commission have through misunderstanding of instructions or otherwise obtained assistance in repairing their properties. These cases the Commission has under consideration and appropriate steps will be taken to have the money so obtained refunded.

On the whole the Commission is well satisfied with the general attitude of all who have been affected by the disaster and it appreciates the consideration that has so generally been shown towards its efforts to meet so many difficult problems. The continued co-operation now sought with the Commission is sure to be heartily afforded.

*Extracted by
L. Fred Monaghan
City Clerk.*