

Relief Commission Headquarters,
Halifax, Oct. 12, 1918

A meeting of the City Advisory Board and the Halifax Relief Commission was held at the Relief Commission Headquarters on Saturday morning, October 12th -

Present-

T.S. Rogers Chairman
H. Fowlke
R. P. Bell Secretary
G. H. Archibald - Manager Reconstruction
Judge Wallace
Mayor Hawkins
L.F. Monaghan City Clerk
F.W.W. Doane City Engineer
Controller Murphy *Finlay*

Mayor Hawkins- The first matter I wish to bring to your attention is the condition of the streets, due to the rubbish and plaster that are allowed to lie there for months, choking our catchpits and being generally a nuisance in every way. There are instances where there has been debris on the streets since early in July - your debris, and we would like you to get a move on and get it away

T.S. Rogers- Don't you think you ought to summon the other contractors who are leaving debris round?

Mayor Hawkins- The Police say it is your debris.

Cont. Finlay - We are complaining of houses where your men are working. There are several places I could mention. At #115 Spring Garden Road it took me three weeks to have the debris removed.

T.S. Rogers- Who did you complain to?

Controller Finlay- I spoke to Mr. Crosby.

T.S. Rogers- Mr. Archibald is the man you should have spoken to.

F.W.W. Doane - There is another complaint that Controller Hines was making. He says that where the plaster is thrown out of the buildings in some cases it is being thrown out of upper windows right down on to the street. Shutes should be provided in every case to take the plaster down from the upper storey.

T.S. Rogers- This would have to be done in numberless cases. If you ask us to have shutes you are asking something that is impossible from the expense point of view.

F.W.W. Doane- You are throwing the plaster out where it blows into the face of everyone in the neighbourhood. It is not very pleasant, to say the least.

T.S. Rogers- You have to put up with that. It is practically impossible to have shutes for all those buildings.

F.W.W. Doane- We would not allow any private enterprise to do it that way.

T.S. Rogers- This is not an ordinary proposition we are up against.

Mayor Hawkins- Your proposition is the same as that of any other contractor, only it is larger. That should not give you any advantages over other contractors.

F.W.W. Doane- It does not seem to me to be an unreasonable request to make, not to throw the plaster out so that it will blow in the face of everyone who passes. You are apparently defending the practice.

T.S.Rogers- No I am not. I am merely saying it is a big undertaking -I suppose there are five thousand plastering jobs going on here this summer/ We will ask Mr. Archibald to give us a report on the places where the plastering has been on the street for any length of time.

Mayor Hawkins- IN some cases where the houses have had cornices before the disaster, these were not put back.

T.S.Rogers- This is the policy we have adopted, that where the cornice was so damaged that the whole ceiling had to come down, we would not replace the cornice because it meant an enormous amount more work and enormous amount of expense, and in a large number of cases there was no reason why it should be replaced. That was a matter we thoroughly discussed and decided upon. If a man insisted upon a cornice, we would replace it. It was a big and difficult question and we settled it as we thought right. Regarding the plastering, I think the City Council are going a little too far when they say we must have a shute for every place. There are about 5000 places where plastering is being done.

G.H.Archibald- What we are planning to do is this. We have asked the Board of Health to give us a list of every house such as Mr. Finlay has given me. If I can get a complete list I will have that all cleaned up in the course of the next three or four days. We can spare some trucks now and we will put them on that. Tomorrow we are going to put out everything we have there in the way of transport and get the City cleaned up. With regard to the moving of plaster and the throwing of it down on the street, if we put shutes there we have to have a man there to get the shute cleared. In most instances the plaster is taken out at the back. In very few cases is it thrown out on the main street, but sometimes it has to be done. If we use shutes it takes more time, as we have to move them from place to place and it takes more money also. People do not realize that we are plastering at the rate of 40 houses a day - that is, we are finishing the plastering in 40 houses, and it means if we waste any time in cleaning them out, we will be that much behind in getting the houses finished. However, we will take steps to see that as often as possible material is thrown out in the back or somewhere where it wont come in the front streets.

T.S.Rogers- Is there any objection from the City point of view, to working on Sunday?

Mayor Hawkins- No. I think it absolutely necessary in the interests of health in the City that you should get this stuff cleaned up.

T.S.Rogers- Speaking for myself, I thought it was being removed as it was taken down.

Mayor Hawkins- All up round Almon and Bilby Streets there has been plaster on the street for months.

G.H.Archibald- The first of the week you will find a large accumulation of plaster, but our teams start on every street every week and they clean that street up by Thursday or Friday of that week. We cannot take the houses in rotation.

Mayor Hawkins- The next subject is whether that we would like to get a cheque for \$13,900 to pay for the Chebuoto, the engine to replace the one lost in the disaster. It was understood that this engine would be paid for.

T.S.Rogers- Who makes that statement?

City Clerk- We expected that the Relief Commission would give us back the engine.

T.S.Rogers- This is like any other claim the City might have against the Commission.

City Clerk- Except for the necessity from a fire standpoint.

T.S.Rogers- I get your point of view, but the Commission does not accept that claim. It admits that the City lost the Patricia, but that does not mean that we can or will pay for it out of the Relief funds.

Mayor Hawkins- You have a lot of buildings here that are liable to burn and you have to depend on our engines chiefly. These buildings are like so much tinder. You have a lot of property here, too, and I think the least you could do would be to pay for at least one of the engines destroyed.

T.S.Rogers- I would like to if I had the funds to do it.

Mayor Hawkins- You are building a lot of structures in the North end and you don't want to have them burned down. You are likely to get reduced rates on account of our having a fully equipped Department. I don't want to say it, but I feel like saying that if you won't pay for our engine, the Fire Department won't be at your disposal. If your buildings catch fire they can just burn down and we won't do anything to help you.

T.S.Rogers- Well, if you want to take the responsibility of our buildings, you can take it.

Mayor Hawkins- If you are not prepared to do right by the City-

T.S.Rogers- You do not understand our difficulties. Your suggestion opens up the whole question of the responsibility in connection with the explosion.

Mayor Hawkins- The Government took full responsibility. Mr. Borden said they would pay dollar for dollar.

T.S.Rogers- What an extraordinary thing to say.

Mayor Hawkins- I am willing to have it published. I say it advisably. Borden said the people would be paid dollar for dollar.

T.S.Rogers- I am not aware that Sir Robert ever said the people would be paid back dollar for dollar. If he did, that is a matter for him and not for us. It is true we have been appointed to expend certain monies that were granted for purposes of relief. You can't put us in the false position you try to. We would be committing an absolute breach of trust if we undertook to pay any claims to the City at the present time.

Mayor Hawkins- I say you are entirely wrong in your point of view. I say the City should get it first of all.

T.S.Rogers- You say the City should receive first consideration. Further, you say that, understanding that we have not enough funds in our hands to pay all the losses. We should therefore pay the City for what it has lost for schools, fire engines and buildings and let the people who lost their homes, do without. It must be one thing or the other. We have set apart the main portion of our fund for the purpose of re-constructing their houses, and that is going to be done before the City gets its fire engine or anything else, before manufacturers, etc., get their money. If there are funds enough left, we will distribute it as we think it should be distributed.

Mayor Hawkins- You are not restoring the people's houses. I can get dozens of people who do not know where they are going to live, and who cannot get houses from you. You are building a lot of ramshackle buildings. I do not know what the people are going to do. You are building a lot of rookeries to let out to every Tom, Dick and Harry. The fact is you do not care. Someone remarked that it looked like a country piggery.

T.S. Rogers- You show absolute ignorance of what we are doing. You have no idea of our duties or responsibilities or of what we are going to do. You should not be urging, as Mayor of the City, personal opinions of that sort, because they are not creditable to the City. We are trying to do a great task the best we can, and these reflections are absolutely unjustified.

Mayor Hawkins- You are doing the best you can with the houses at Boulderwood.

T.S. Rogers- As far as I know, there has not been a dollar paid out in Boulderwood.

Mayor Hawkins- You do not have to have an audit or anything else.

T.S. Rogers- That is absolutely untrue. We have to have an audit- that is provided.

Mayor Hawkins- The auditor says he cannot audit your accounts at all.

T.S. Rogers- He does not say anything of the kind, and we have an auditor of our own who has been in charge ever since the first day after the disaster. We have asked the Auditor General to take such steps as he thinks necessary to audit our books and accounts.

Mayor Hawkins- They should be published.

T.S. Rogers- That is a matter for the Auditor General. We can have an investigation on oath at any time you want it, into any of our affairs.

Mayor Hawkins- You cannot go to the Courts. Why should you have a special clause in your charter providing that you cannot be reached by the Courts?

T.S. Rogers- There is no such clause in the charter. Anything that we do that is not properly done, can be reached by the Courts.

Mayor Hawkins- It is absolutely impossible to get evidence.

T.S. Rogers- Why do you make such a statement? There is absolutely no truth in it.

Mayor Hawkins- There is truth in it.

T.S. Rogers- Then you have never read the Charter.

Mayor Hawkins- I have read the Charter.

T.S. Rogers- Then you do not understand it. Now listen - The Charter protected the former Committee who came in to help the people of Halifax right after the disaster.

Mayor Hawkins.- And the same protection is over this Committee.

T.S. Rogers- - It is not. You have been misled by someone who thinks he knows something about it. The Charter protected the former Committee. If you did anything after the disaster and did it in good faith, the Charter protects you. Their obligations and liabilities were cast upon us and we have to stand by them, and if we do not, we can be sued as anyone else could be sued. The only thing we cannot be sued for, is this- If a person claims a certain amount under the relief fund, that is left to our discretion and we would be in a nice mess if every person who imagined he had a claim against this Commission, would sue it. That is the decision and the only decision and the proper decision. If you come in here and claim \$2000 to get your house papered and we say we will allow you \$100, you cant sue us for the \$2000

T.S.Rogers- Are you going to judge us on 8000 cases we have to deal with? We live up to our precedent, or try to. You see, the money that is placed in our hands is there to be distributed according to our discretion to the people most entitled to participate in it. We could never have paid out one dollar if we could have been sued. We would have had to wait until about 15,000 law suits had been determined. This discussion has arisen in connection with the City's claim for payment for the engine to replace the Patricia. The decision of the Commission in relation to all City property is that inasmuch as the charge for restoring of City property is a general City charge, the City should look after that, rather than we should take the money away from people who individually have suffered, because the charge for the restoration of all City property is spread by taxation over the whole City. So we at the present time have had to leave the City to look after itself. The Government may some day recognize your claim.

Mayor Hawkins- This is an exceptional case. We have the engine and you might look upon it as largely in your own interest.

T.S.Rogers- Our interests and the City's interests are all the same. We are simply trying to look after certain features of the City's activities. Why do you speak of the Relief houses being ours any more than belonging to the City?

Mayor Hawkins- I was given to understand that this was to be paid for and replaced the same as the Chief's car. There was some official understanding---

T.S.Rogers- None whatever at any time, as far as the Commission is concerned.

Cont. Finlay- Your appraisal Board or someone you elected, appraised the loss.

T.S.Rogers- We appraised all losses. We have asked every business man in the City to make a statement of his losses. We want to give the Government a list of the total losses of the City.

Mayor Hawkins- It is time the Government did something, then.

T.S.Rogers- In other great disasters similar to this, you wont find anything like the progress that has been made in this one. We do not mind criticism and we get nothing but criticism, but as a great favor, I wish the Mayor would come here and say "Gentlemen, you are trying to do your best." I have never had a word like that yet.

Mayor Hawkins- I haven't seen that you were trying to do your best. Some people have been waiting for nearly a year for a house to live in.

T.S.Rogers- Some of the people cannot get houses for two years yet. How many houses are there to be built?

Mayor Hawkins- I don't know at the present time.

T.S.Rogers- You ought to leave us to attend to our business and you can attend to yours.

Mayor Hawkins- The houses you are building up there are ramshackle old buildings. Take the case of the Isolation Hospital - That is a sample of your architecture.

T.S.Rogers- You had better leave that matter alone. That is a matter that the City had better leave alone. We gave \$10,000 to help the City out. Why should we build an Infectious Hospital except to help the City out?

Mayor Hawkins- What do you mean by saying we should leave that matter alone?

T.S.Rogers- Never mind - just leave it alone.

Mayor Hawkins- But I don't understand and I would like to know.

T.S.Rogers- I'll tell you privately after this meeting.

Cont. Finlay- The claim is that a draft plan came up and it was not acted upon, but another plan was drawn, and the upshot was that the building was put up there at a cost of about \$28,000. \$10,000 of which the Commission will provide.

Mayor Hawkins- We have a building there, but the idea of putting up a hospital with permanent windows.

T.S.Rogers- Mr. Johnston was here and the plans were under his supervision. What more could we do? We asked Mr. Murphy at the time, if the City would take that over, and by special request we took it. This is the thanks we get for it. It is not fair.

Mayor Hawkins- I was instructed wrongly.

T.S.Rogers- I am not blaming Mr. Johnston, but what I am asking you is, did not the Commission do its best to have things satisfactory? It is unfair to come here and blame us.

Mayor Hawkins- You have the preparing of the Tuberculosis Hospital plans is there not some way of speeding that up?

T.S.Rogers- We let you have the services of our architects at cost. As a Commission we have nothing to do with that at all, except that the architects were here and we asked their services at cost for the Tuberculosis League. We have been urging upon the City authorities and every other authority the necessity of hurrying up the Hospital, and we have always been ready to do all we could in the matter of preparing the plans.

R.P. Bell- Ross & McDonald have had the plans there waiting for O.K. for weeks.

City Engineer- I understand it was because Mr. Ross was away. We were waiting for him to come back so that we could have a final conference on the plans. Mr. Bell says he came back yesterday.

Mayor Hawkins- Getting back to the Chebuoto engine, we have no money to pay for this engine.

T.S. Rogers- Neither have we.

Mayor Hawkins- I guess we will have to send it back.

T.S.Rogers- That is for you. I do not want you to think that the Commission is unsympathetic with the loss. Have you seen our report to the Government? In this report the Commission unanimously recommended to the Government that all losses should be made good by the public fund. We are on record as saying this, and will never recede from that position. We will urge that upon the Government and will cooperate with yourselves when the time comes. I want the Board of Control to understand that, and the citizens you represent, to understand that the attitude of the Commission has always been that way and no other way. It is unfair for you to represent to the public the Commission's views as being any other than your own in reference to the restoration of damage, and we are prepared to cooperate with you in every way, but the funds placed in our hands are not sufficient to meet the City's claims and we will not recognize the City's claims until we have the funds to do so. We have, from the first, tried to help the City in making them loans on a business basis, because it could not be on any other basis.

Cont. Finlay- At what rate would you loan this money to the City?

T.S.Rogers- Originally we said 5% until you could get power to issue bonds, and then at the current rate, which is 6%. We offered to loan you money in case you were up against difficulties in borrowing money. We have always been willing to meet you. You have reached the limit, which is \$250,000. The letter we sent to Mr. Hopewell yesterday was to let him know that. Now there is \$180,000 for schools. You cannot come and ask us for money whenever you want it. You must let us know in advance, so that we can prepare our budget.

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Mayor Hawkins- If we cant get money when we want it, what is the good of it?

T.S. Rogers- If you cannot go to the bankers and brokers and get money, and have to come to us, it is fair to us to let us know a month or six weeks in advance.

City Clerk- The reason we did not ask for the money for the fire engine among the amount to be borrowed from the Commission, was because the whole Council thought the Commission would look upon the engine as different from the schools.

T.S. Rogers- We were asked this year to advance up to \$250,000 if necessary, including what we have spent on behalf of the City.

Mayor Hawkins- It was always understood that the reason this amount was not put in the \$250,000 was this this was to ~~be~~ be paid for out-right.

T.S. Rogers- Dont say it was understood.

Mayor Hawkins- I distinctly understood that. There was some understanding with the Commission.

T.S. Rogers- There was no such understanding and no such expression of opinion.

Mayor Hawkins- We are in a hole now - either the engine has to be paid for, or it has to be sent back. Will you take it into consideration?

T.S. Rogers- What is the use of taking it into consideration?

Mayor Hawkins- You might find it handy sometime.

T.S. Rogers- Aren't we entitled to protection from the City ?

Cont. Finlay- The engine is here and we ought to decide something about it.

Mayor Hawkins- We will have to send it back - of course the reason we did not borrow from the bank for it, was because we felt it would be dealt with by the Commission.

T.S. Rogers- Just go to the premier and say that through an oversight or mistake that amount was omitted. Cant you seal bonds now?

City Clerk- We never asked you for anything but explosion damages.

T.S. Rogers- We do not admit the principle that you can come to us to borrow money to meet explosion damages on account on the explosion. We have been assisting you as much as we thought necessary and on market conditions/ You cannot in this way place on this Commission any liability to pay the City for its losses out of relief funds which do not extend to such claims. The Commission cannot recognize any liability, direct or indirect with respect to the explosion. We are only too glad to assist you in borrowing money in case you have difficulties, legal or marketable.

Mayor Hawkins- You have loaned money to the Provincial Government.

T.S. Rogers- We had some money to invest and we bought Provincial securities, as we bought City securities. We never loaned money to the Provincial Government.

T.S. Rogers- Might I make a request? The Commission made a request the other day that if possible the City would build the Union Street sewer to help us in our building operations. We would like very much to have that sewer put in this Fall. The foundations could be connected with the sewer rather than build houses and then have to build cesspools. That sewer was high on the list of sewers to be constructed.

Mayor Hawkins -But the decision of the City is only to build sewers where there are houses.

T.S. Rogers- That decision might be changed on account of the explosion.

Mayor Hawkins- You could give us a list of the houses to be built there.

T.S. Rogers- We could do that in the Spring. There are one or two houses built there now.

City Engineer- Would not that be time enough to consider it.

Mayor Hawkins- Are you going to change the grade of that street? It would be practically impossible to drain some of the old foundations.

R.P. Bell- You mean to drain those on the east side into the Union St. sewer?

T.S. Rogers- That matter is being taken up I think with Mr. Seymour and Mr. Johnston.

City Engineer- I presume the Mayor means that the levels of the floor of the houses should be decided, for the grade was decided long ago but the people would not build to it. We have no law that could make them build to it.

T.S. Rogers- We hoped that some of the foundations could be saved on the east side of Union Street

Mayor Hawkins- It is going to make the cost of that sewer excessive, if you save the foundations.

T.S. Rogers- Alright, we wont do it then.

City Engineer- You say you wont have any houses ready until the Spring. We have been in the habit of building sewers all winter.

T.S. Rogers - Well then, we will have some hope of getting it in the Spring.

City Engineer- We expect to build all our sewers by contract, so it will not be a slow matter.

T.S. Rogers- If you want us to go on and do it, we will furnish the money and the settlement can come later. If you pass a resolution of this sort it will be done.

Cont. Finlay- If course in all the sewes you are building there would be necessity for the City Engineer to have some supervision.

T.S. Rogers- Absolutely - it is all City Work.

City Engineer- If there are to be discussions later with reference to sewers and water pipes, I think any part of the water system that is coming under discysson should be laid at least with the knowledge of the Superintendent of the Water Department.

T.S. Rogers- Anything in City work will come under your supervision and approval. We want Mr. Doane's assistance in this and everything else of that kind. I would propose that you pass a resolution authorizing us to construct the necessary sewers in the devastated district, subject to the engineer's approval and check as to cost, etc., and as to money, we are not asking for money. Is there any objection from your point of view, to that?

City Engineer- I do not see any objection.

T.S. Rogers- Supposing we say what we have in mind, and leave it at that, including the Union St. sewer.

City Engineer- I do not think the City would like to accept a blanket proposition. I do not want too much responsibility placed on me.

City Clerk- Why not make an application in each case?

Cont. Finlay- Are there any streets where the sewer is put out of commission?

T.S. Rogers- I do not think so

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T.S. Rogers- This new system of taxation. It taxes lands and improvements?

Cont. Finlay- Separately.

T.S. Rogers- There is no personal property tax?

Mayor Hawkins- There is a household tax, based on the rental of the house.

T.S. Rogers- About this property of ours where we are building, in relation to taxation. Now what I have in mind- under the law ~~are~~ are not assessable. The idea of the commission is that when the property becomes profitable to the private owner, we of course turn it in, and in relation to our own property, when we come to get rent for it. It is not fair to tax us at the present time when we are not getting anything from it, and a good many of these houses occupied this winter will be occupied free from rent. We will charge a nominal rent.

Mayor Hawkins- But if this property is all taken out of our assessment book----

T.S. Rogers- It will all be put back as soon as it becomes revenue.

Mayor Hawkins- Why not have the property all assessed, and that would be one of our claims against the Commission.

T.S. Rogers- You are just assessing the people who are entitled to relief, because it takes that much out of the Relief fund.

T.S. Rogers- I am just mentioning it to you, and it can be under discussion. The Commission is now preparing statements of all losses all over the City, including the City's own losses, so that we can make a second report to the Government. This will be the third report, counting the verbal report. The second one did not deal with property losses. We all know that the cost of labour and material has gone up very much since, and that those estimates were insufficient. That means, of course, that on the basis of reports, very much more money will be required for what we have been endeavouring to do. The Relief Commission cannot go to the Government and say we want more money without being able to inform them as to where the thing is going to end, and so we will have to postpone these claims until we can go back to the Government, giving them the amount and classifying the claims and putting the damages against each, saying how far our money will go. In the meantime, I want you to appreciate that our task is a very difficult one, and we cannot recognize your claims. We do not want the public to have any other impression than that we are sympathetic, for if they have any other impression it will weaken our hands.

Mayor Hawkins- I think the City's claims should be dealt with somewhat differently than the manufacturers or other claims.

T.S. Rogers- Every class of claims say the same thing. The City's claims are not ahead of private claims.

R.P. Bell- The Mayor referred to the Commission having done some work at Boulderwood. I am interested in property at Boulderwood, and I thought he might have meant the commission did some work for me.

Mayor Hawkins- It is common talk on the street., that material and work were being done at Boulderwood - materials were taken over there and work done by the Commission.

R.P. Bell- Is the general impression that it was done for Ralph Bell?

Mayor Hawkins- Oh, I don't know.

R.P. Bell- I insist upon knowing what you mean. Is the impression that the work is being done for Ralph Bell?

Mayor Hawkins- I have heard your name mentioned.

R.P. Bell- It puts me in a very unfair position. Unfortunately I did re-build my house at Boulderwood and I never realized that the Commission would be credited with doing the work. My house in Boulderwood was rebuilt by Bate McMahon and Co. and I have their bills for \$3500. The plumbing work was done by Farquhar Bros. Most of my material was purchased from the Telfer Wood Co. of Bridgewater. Some of the extra finishing of my house was done by Silliker and McMahon. The same misapprehension with regard to material and transportation as that under which you may be laboring, was probably due to the fact that came up yesterday in relation to some of Bate-McMahon's trucks. They had loaned to the Commission certain motor trucks without charge. When they started to do work on their own account, they took their trucks back and those trucks were recognized by the public as belonging to the Commission. They also had a lumber yard at North Street where they stored a large amount of material.

T.S. Rogers- The commission had nothing to do with Mr. Bell's property. I think if Mr. Bell could have foreseen that the fact of his being Secretary of the Commission and the work of the commission going on at the same time, would have given rise to such conclusions, he would not have had the work done just now. This will give you some idea of what we have to suffer.

Mayor Hawkins- I think if I was given an opportunity I could prove that material was checked out by the Commission to, Boulderwood.

T.S. Rogers- You can see our records at any time.

Mayor Hawkins- If they have not been burned up.

T.S. Rogers- Why do you say and insinuate such things. You are a public officer and subject to criticism. You know how much unfair criticism there is. You should not criticize on the basis of mere rumors.

Mayor Hawkins- This is not mere rumor-

T.S. Rogers- Supposing Bate McMahon had loaned us some lumber and we are going to return it.

Mayor Hawkins- The connection of Bate McMahon with this Commission has been criticized.

T.S. Rogers- If you have any charge with regard to the honesty and uprightness of any member of this commission it is your duty to make a charge and come up here like a man and make a charge. An enquiry will be made immediately. Unless you are in a position to make a charge of that kind you have no business to be spreading rumors. If you have any charge to make that reflects on the honor of any man we invite you to make the charge and things will be investigated, immediately and thoroughly.

Mayor Hawkins- I have heard of cases where prices were paid for lumber, which were not justified by the market. Someone must have got a rake-off.

T.S. Rogers- There is very little truth in that. You suggest that and suggest the name of the party and we will have an investigation on Monday morning at 10 o'clock.