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Statement of
Henry P. Davison, Chairman
on behalf of the
American Red Cross War Council
on its retirement
March 1, 1919



The American Red Cross
National Headquarters
Washington, D. C.



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Henry P. Davison, Chairman
on behalf of the
American Red Cross War Council

To the American People:

"The War Council of the American Red Cross, appointed by President Wilson on May 10, 1917, to carry on the work of the American Red Cross during the war, will, at its request and by vote of the Central Committee cease to exist today.

"Immediately on the signing of the armistice the War Council instituted studies to determine when the strictly war work of the organization would be sufficiently matured to enable the direction of affairs to be resumed by the permanent staff. Henry P. Davison, being in Paris when the armistice was signed, summoned a conference there of the heads of all the Red Cross Commissions in Europe to canvass the situation. After considering all the factors it was concluded to make the transition on March 1. The very fortunate choice of Dr. Livingston Farrand as the new chairman of the Central Committee, and thereby the permanent chief executive of the Red Cross, makes possible the consummation of this plan under the most favorable conditions.

Accounts Audited by War Department

"Detailed reports to Congress and a complete audit of its accounts by the War Department will constitute the final record of Red Cross activity during the war. Although it has been the rule to make public all expenditures when authorized and to give detailed information relative to all work undertaken, the War Council in turning over its responsibilities to Dr. Farrand and his associates desires to give a brief resumé of Red Cross war time

activities to the American people, to whom the Red Cross belongs, and whose generous contributions have made possible all that has been accomplished.

Gifts Exceed \$400,000,000

“During the past nearly twenty-one months the American people have given in cash and supplies to the American Red Cross more than \$400,000,000. No value can be placed upon the contributions of service which have been given without stint and oftentimes at great sacrifice by millions of our people.

“The effort of the American Red Cross in this war has constituted by far the largest voluntary gifts of money, of hand and heart, ever contributed purely for the relief of human suffering. Through the Red Cross the heart and spirit of the whole American people have been mobilized to take care of our own, to relieve the misery incident to the war, and also to reveal to the world the supreme ideals of our national life.

Work for Our Own

“Everyone who has had any part in this war effort of the Red Cross is entitled to congratulate himself. No thanks from anyone could be equal in value to the self satisfaction everyone should feel for the part taken. Fully 8,000,000 American women have exerted themselves in Red Cross service.

“When we entered the war the American Red Cross had about 500,000 members. Today, as the result of the recent Christmas Membership Roll Call, there are upwards of 17,000,000 full paid members outside of the members of the Junior Red Cross, numbering perhaps 9,000,000 school children additional.

“The chief effort of the Red Cross during the war has been to care for our men in service and to aid our Army and Navy wherever the Red Cross may have been called on to assist. As to this phase of the work Surgeon General Ireland of the United States Army recently said: ‘The Red Cross has been an enterprise as vast as the war itself. From the beginning it has done those things which the Army Medical Corps wanted done, but could not do itself.’

Activities Abroad

"The Red Cross endeavor in France has naturally been upon an exceptionally large scale where service has been rendered to the American Army and to the French Army and the French people as well, the latter particularly during the trying period when the Allied World was waiting for the American Army to arise in force and power. Hospital emergency service for our Army in France has greatly diminished, but the Red Cross is still being called upon for service upon a large scale in the great base hospitals, where thousands of American sick and wounded are still receiving attention. At these hospitals the Red Cross supplies huts and facilities for the amusement and recreation of the men as they become convalescent. Our Army of Occupation in Germany was followed with Medical Units prepared to render the same emergency aid and supply service which was the primary business of the Red Cross during hostilities. The Army Canteen Service along the lines of travel has actually increased since the armistice.

"As for work among the French people, now that hostilities have ceased, the French themselves naturally prefer as far as possible to provide for their own. It has accordingly been determined that the guiding principle of Red Cross policy in France henceforth shall be to have punctilious regard to its every responsibility, but to direct its efforts primarily to assisting French relief societies. The liberated and devastated regions of France have been divided by the Government into small districts, each officially assigned to a designated French relief organization.

9,000 Workers in France

"The American Red Cross work in France was initiated by a Commission of eighteen men who landed on French shores June 13, 1917. Since then some 9,000 persons have been upon the rolls in France, of whom 7,000 were actively engaged when the armistice was signed. An indication of the present scale of the work will be obtained from the fact that the services of 6,000 persons are still required.

"Our American Expeditionary Force having largely evacuated England, the activities of the Red Cross Commission there are

naturally upon a diminishing scale. Active operations are still in progress in Archangel and Siberia.

"The work in Italy has been almost entirely on behalf of the civilian population of that country. In the critical hours of Italy's struggle the American people, through their Red Cross, sent a practical message of sympathy and relief, for which the Government and people of Italy have never ceased to express their gratitude.

Supplies and Personnel to Near East

"The occasion for such concentration of effort in Italy, England, Belgium and even in France having naturally and normally diminished, it has been possible to divert supplies and personnel in large measure to the aid of those people in the Near East who have hitherto been inaccessible to outside assistance, but whose sufferings have been upon an appalling scale. The needs of these peoples are so vast that governments alone can meet them, but the American Red Cross is making an effort to relieve immediately the more acute distress.

"An extensive group of American workers has been dispatched to carry vitally needed supplies, and to work this winter in the various Balkan countries. In order to coördinate their activities, a Balkan Commission has been established, with headquarters at Rome, Italy, from which point alone all the Balkan centers can be reached promptly.

"A Commission has just reached Poland with doctors and nurses, medical supplies, and food for sick children and invalids. An American Red Cross Commission has also been appointed to aid in relieving the suffering of Russian prisoners still confined in German prison camps.

"An important Commission is still working in Palestine. Throughout the war special cooperation has been given to the Armenian and Syrian Relief Commission, which was the only agency able to carry relief in the interior of Turkish dominions.

Red Cross Will Continue

"Red Cross effort is thus far flung. It will continue to be so. But the movement represented by this work has likewise assumed

an intimate place in the daily life of our people at home. The army of workers which has been recruited and trained during the war must not be demobilized. All our experience in the war shows clearly that there is an unlimited field for service of the kind which can be performed with peculiar effectiveness by the Red Cross. What its future tasks may be it is yet impossible to forecast. We know that so long as there is an American Army in the field the Red Cross will have a special function to perform.

“Nothing could be of greater importance to the American Red Cross than the plans just set in motion by the five great Red Cross societies of the world to develop a program of extended activities in the interest of humanity. The conception involves not alone efforts to relieve human suffering, but to prevent it; not alone a movement by the people of an individual nation, but an attempt to arouse all people to a sense of their responsibility for the welfare of their fellow beings throughout the world. It is a program both ideal and practical. Ideal in that its supreme aim is nothing less than veritable ‘Peace on earth, good will to men,’ and practical in that it seeks to take means and measures which are actually available and make them effective in meeting without delay the crisis which is daily recurrent in the lives of all peoples.

“For accomplishing its mission in the years of peace which must lie ahead of us the Red Cross will require the ablest possible leadership, and must enjoy the continued support, sympathy and participation in its work of the whole American people. It is particularly fortunate that such a man as Dr. Livingston Farrand should have been selected as the permanent head of the organization. The unstinted fashion in which all our people gave of themselves throughout the war is the best assurance that our Red Cross will continue to receive that cooperation which will make its work a source of pride and inspiration to every American.”

THE WAR COUNCIL OF THE
AMERICAN RED CROSS,

HENRY P. DAVISON, *Chairman.*

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