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November 11, 1914.

My dear Mrs. Hoover,



Your telegram to me which came last evening, reading as follows:-

"Please send night letter tonight regarding any New York Branch of American Commission Relief of Belgium and pertinent matters. I will probably start east end week."

I have just answered:-

"Am mailing letter tonight for better elucidation of rather complex and delicate situation. Best nothing be said or done there relative to matters here but await my letter."

I despair in a letter of fully acquainting you with the factors and forces which are operative. The conditions here present real problems to whose solution most prayerful consideration has been given and is still proceeding.

New York is so different from the free and independent West. Only those who have lived a life-time in its activities and inter-relations comprehend or know how to tackle it. What seems simple to one in London or the West really presents unexpected intricacies, social and financial and executive.

Mr. Hoover and yourself know you both have always our abiding appreciation, affection and respect. Only a few





in this country and fewer still in New York realise the commanding and pervading goodness of your lives.

The Belgian emergency developed suddenly and when Mr. Hoover by high official request took in hand the situation abroad and the vast responsibilities of getting an unexampled response from this and other neutral countries, certain things had already happened or been started in this country, of whose genesis and relations I will only instance two or three.

When in August the Atrocity Commission came over to protest to President Wilson about violations of the Hague Conventions, an organization was formed here called the Belgian Relief Committee, with Mr. Havenith the Belgian Minister as Honorary Chairman, a Belgian Clergyman as Chairman and Robert W. DeForest as Vice Chairman, and about a dozen good New York names including one or two Belgian merchants resident here. They became the recipients of funds donated which came in rather slowly, there being numerous other organizations soliciting like the Red Cross, Committee of Mercy, Ambulance Funds, Hospital Funds, etc. Then the imminence of famine began to be impressed by Press cable and each day confirmed the dreadful certainty.

On October 28 Mr. Hoover cabled me to help and find out the status here and to advise what course to take. In my reply I suggested among other things that a group of strong women might be formed by Mrs. Bates to gather under one organization all





the great organizations of women numbering 8,000,000. Mrs. Bates had just come from a conference in Pittsfield of delegates representing such a number, contemplating a Union Council for another purpose - hence the inspiration.

On October 31 Mr. Hoover cabled to Mrs. Bates as follows:

"The American Commission for Relief in Belgium
"which has been set up officially by the American
"Ambassadors to execute their international agree-
"ments for the provisioning of Belgium and which
"embraces American Ambassadors as Honorary Chair-
"man, the American Consuls and American Residents
"of England and Belgium as members, would like to
"have you undertake the formation of a great group
"of American Women who would support us in securing
"food or money for the Belgian people. It is cer-
"tain that the entire population of 7,000,000 are
"on the verge of famine and that 80,000 tons of
"cereals per month is the absolute minimum upon
"which body and soul can be kept together and this
"provides a ration of but 10 ounces per capita per
"diem. The situation is one of greatest gravity.
"We have sent an appeal to the American Press to
"open subscriptions for our purposes, all of which
"subscriptions we want translated into actual food
"stuffs from United States. We would be grateful
"for the help of yourself and all those who rightly
"should come to your support."

To this she replied after conferring with some friends,
as follows:-

"The official invitation of the American Commis-
"sion for Relief in Belgium received. I accept with
"deep sense of responsibility. I am forming a repre-
"sentative Committee which will do its uttermost to
"enlist co-operation from all American Women."

Then she started to get the group formed, and found some
important people generously responsive but insistent on
their group of picked women. A whole list of most prominent
people throughout the country, Mrs. Crocker, Mrs. McCormick





and many others were discussed and eliminated because it was difficult to act. Seven of their naming, not of Mrs. Bates' naming, were finally chosen under what seemed the best system of centralized management. Some were strongly desirous of naming the movement as auxiliary to the Belgian Relief Committee of New York. Since, however, Mr. Hoover was trying in three directions to get another Committee in New York and the DeForest group was certainly not devoted to him at any point, Mrs. Bates held out for a name which would throw the force of the Womens Movement on the Commission and this name was finally, though with many reserves, conceded her. The Womans group insisted upon official Belgian recognition here and alliance with and co-operation with the Belgian Relief Committee of New York before they would consent to serve or to allow their names to be cabled to London. The first direct approach to the Minister met the assertion that he must be approached through the DeForest Committee. Mrs. Bates cabled this and Mr. Hoover wired back to send the list of Women's names and he would get them confirmed in Belgium. This when suggested by Mrs. Bates met a stone wall of opposition; in fact, she feared the whole fat was in the fire.

Naturally one sought to learn the source of the power of the DeForest or officially the Belgian Relief Committee of New York. Mr. DeForest is the Chairman of the Charities Organization Society interlocking hundreds of charitable organi-



zations embracing all the best social and business-like names of the city. Also Vice-Chairman Red Cross, etc., etc., hence no one would run counter or the risk of conflict.

After much tact and care a 'modus vivendi' was negotiated, of alliance and co-operation, and an agreed formula of announcement was telegraphed to Mr. Hoover November 7, which read as follows:-

"Release to Press begins, at request of
"The American Commission for Relief in Belgium
"movement has been inaugurated to secure the co-
"operation of all organizations of women in
"America. The Committee is called the Womens Sec-
"tion of the American Commission for Relief in
"Belgium. Its Executive Committee consists of
"Mrs. Lindon Bates, Miss Anne Morgan, Miss Mary
"Parsons, Mrs Edward R. Hewitt, Mrs. August Bel-
"mont, Mrs. Wm. K. Vanderbilt and Miss Maude Wet-
"more. It is in alliance and is co-operating
"with the Belgian Relief Committee of New York.
"It is securing a large Council and the co-operation
"of the leading Womens Organizations in a nation
"wide movement for securing food for Belgium.ends."

This represented the outcome of compromises and concessions all round and had been worked out after four tense days of effort.

Mr. Hoover sent a cable via the Commercial Cable dated London 11 p.m. Saturday November 7, saying he proposed to release Monday morning and asking if he could add your name. Through the fault of the Cable Co. this message was not delivered to Mrs. Bates until Sunday noon. After the experiences both of personnel and of events she knew that the suggestion of putting into that group a woman they did not know would be explosive and she asked me to cable at once to not add the



name but to leave her arrange the closest alliance she could for Mrs. Hoover. I cabled Mr. Hoover to "release" as per the form sent. Next morning the Associated Press had a statement with no mention of the so vital and arranged announcement of DeForest alliance and your name despite the warning was added to the Executive Committee. Mrs. Bates had planned to propose the Belgian Minister's wife and Madam Vandervelde, wife of a Minister of State from Antwerp, and yourself as Honorary Chairmen or Patronesses. But the opportunity had gone for winning out. She has since suggested the name for the place but it did not carry. They are, however, desirous of working out the closest alliance and support for the Californian movement and for all movements everywhere. They will co-operate to the fullest and are enthusiastic about what has been done on the Coast. Mrs. Bates is wiring you to get all the facts; she will try to secure that all personnel may be happily linked up.

This is the genesis of a most deplorable slip. Distances and time prevented the possibility of either side knowing what and why things were as they were, with the uttermost wish to have things just right on both sides. What none outside could know or realize was that the group of seven here, very strong and ultra-conservative, had already settled the plans of organization and action. These a Board of Management all New York residents and available and picked for special reasons. Each

Chairman has an auxiliary Committee of five chosen chosen by the Chairman but approved by the Board, on Finance, Organization, Transport, etc.

An Executive Co-operating Body composed of the Heads, Presidents of the Great Women's Organizations will go to the country in the mighty appeal of 5 million or more organised women, who ought to be able to start an avalanche of food to Belgium.

Mrs. Bates was only one cog - almost an incidental one - in the driving pinion and the mechanism of many wheels was adjusted to just so many and such teeth and she was powerless to do otherwise than let the mill grind. When Mr. DeForest was informed of the composition he allowed it was the strongest working group of women ever brought together in New York and was mighty glad to defer to them and their purpose - so also the Foundation.

There are other factors. The Belgian Minister has been trying to make, the Washington-Baltimore Commission of which Lars Anderson and Cardinal Gibbons are leaders the dominant U.S. body and had tried to limit the activities of New York to New York, and there is still a strain in that direction which will be futile. Other groups are trying to have the President appoint a large Commission or an Official Receiver, a Major Col Logan who was sent to Dayton, Ohio, in Ohio Flood days. Heaven only knows what he may be induced to do.

Meanwhile the Foundation saws wood in its own way, and money etc., is pouring into the DeForest Committee. Philadelphia is



in the running with one or two Wanamaker ships. When Will Irwin rang me up yesterday he said "he had come over as Mr. Hoover's personal representative to adjust things and start a more vigorous press campaign." I invited him to dinner, and afterwards told him what he and everyone else was up against in detail. He said he and London thought the situation was simple; he allowed it was appallingly complex and delicate.

Now this morning I get a cable letting me know that another complication (perhaps a good one) with Mr. Bok of the Ladies Home Journal who it appears had a charter for a Womans movement, countersigned in effect by the Queen of Belgium which he will soon blaze forth with. Also that you have one in California which has secured two cargoes of food.

All this, dear friend, I hope is helpful to make understood the difficulties, the limits and limitors which beset a very world of people anxious to assist. Mrs. Bates has had some hard bumps, so have you and in one or two directions my feelings are raw, and there will be more despite every care. In a cause so great, an emergency so imminent and desperate, the individual is nothing and succor everything. It is enough that one has the consciousness of a worthy effort, well done; the approval of one's Live Soul.



Very sincerely,

Linda W. Bates