

JUNE 24, 1970

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSECHARLES TAFT TO HEAD NEW
PERU EARTHQUAKE VOLUNTARY
ASSISTANCE GROUP

Carrying out the directives of President Richard Nixon, today Counselor Robert H. Finch announced the establishment of the Peru Earthquake Voluntary Assistance Group. It will coordinate the private contributions of American citizens and agencies to help Peru recover from its recent disaster. Charles P. Taft, former Mayor of Cincinnati, Ohio, and a current member of its City Council, has agreed to chair the new organization. Taft is an established and recognized leader among the many Americans in private relief activities. He has been the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid since President Harry S. Truman established it in 1946, and has served with other charitable groups both before and after World War II.

Finch, who is responsible for coordinating the overall U.S. assistance to Peru, public as well as private, indicated that the assistance from the public sector has been effective in the emergency days immediately following the earthquake of May 31. Additionally, the generous outpouring of assistance from private citizens has been most helpful and has brought statements of appreciation from the Peruvian press.

Now the first few weeks of dealing with death and emergency injury are over. There is need for relating the public and private efforts and determining what each should do. Mr. Taft's group will be able to provide coordination for the voluntary agencies. The group will be informed on Peruvian needs and will set these before the voluntary agencies, which are already doing so much.

The committee's first task will be the setting of guidelines for the kinds of materials and other assistance needed in Peru. It will encourage a regulated flow of needed assistance to the disaster area which will be timed to meet Peru's recovery needs.

The coordinating group will have a small membership. This is not yet selected, but will include representation from U.S. organizations which are helping extensively in Peru. The voluntary agencies now send assistance through private channels as well as by way of arrangements made available by the Disaster Relief Division in the Agency for International Development. Spokesmen for the new group have emphasized that the needs at this stage are not for food, but for money, which Americans can contribute to recognized voluntary agencies, and for those specific items which the group will list.

Mr. Taft expects to have a small staff which will maintain liaison for Counselor Finch and himself with all of the voluntary activities. The staff will probably operate during the next four to six months or as long as there is need for reconstruction coordination.

The address for the new organization is Peru Earthquake Voluntary Assistance Group, Washington, D. C. 20523. Communications for Mr. Finch or Mr. Taft on the disaster should be addressed there.

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