

North Front Sewer Caves Upon Pair

Back-Hoe Running Tip-off to Tragedy

Two construction workers died yesterday in a cave-in a stone's throw from one of Belleville's busiest thoroughfares — and their fate went unnoticed for five hours.

Victims of the tragedy with a macabre touch were 25-year-old Patrick Black, 189 Albert Street, and Douglas Cronkright, 33, 19 Pringle Drive, both married men with young families.

They died unobserved, in the crumbling of a 10-foot sewer trench linking the Tops Motel with a city trunk pipe on North Front Street.

It is believed they died about 5:15 or 5:30 p.m. First suspicions of the tragedy were aroused at 10:30 p.m.

Coroner Dr. J. Russell Scott said immediately afterwards there would be "a full inquiry." He said it was likely the Ontario coroner's office would send experts to survey the scene.

Both men were working in the trench immediately adjacent to the motel swimming pool and within easy view of the motel restaurant. They were digging the trench with a back-hoe and it was the fact its motor was still running late last night that first hinted at the possibility of the cave-in.

The job was under contract to Quinte Valley Contracting Ltd., operated by Jack Lambert of Belleville.

The city has a trench inspector whose duty normally would be to inspect such excavations for safety.

However public works officials today said they had not been informed that the excavation work at the Tops Motor Hotel was in progress.

ALARM GIVEN

Families of both men became worried when they failed to show up for supper. As the night wore on both wives were increasingly agitated and started making telephone calls.

About 10 p.m. Mrs. Black called her brother-in-law William Black and said her husband had not returned home.

He hurried down to the motel where he found "the machine still running and the exhaust was coming off it". A truck and automobile used by the men were parked on the motel lot.

"Everybody walking by and



WAYNE MUIR . . . may have timed tragedy.

didn't even think", he said.

He called Mr. Lambert who joined him at the motel. Fearing the worst, Mr. Lambert immediately called city police and said he suspected a cave-in might have occurred.

"I think they have been in there four or five hours — and nobody knew it", said Mr. Lambert as firemen arrived on the scene to scarch the trench.

When the emergency call

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ACCIDENTS - BELLEVILLE

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