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Large Number of Witnesses Examined at Enquiry Here

Royal Commission into the Disaster at the Hollinger Mine Continued Its Sessions Here Each Day Last Week. Evidence Given by Many Witnesses.

Last week The Advance's report of the Royal Commission sitting here to enquire into the recent disaster at the Hollinger Mine closed with the examination of Mr. Mackenzie, an employee of the Paymaster, but formerly an organizer here for the I.W.W., and now with the O.B.U. Mr. Mackenzie had left the impression with the commissioner, His Honour Judge T. E. Godson, that he (Mackenzie) had tried to discuss dangers at the mine with Mr. Geo. E. Cole, mining inspector, but the latter had replied that it was "out of his jurisdiction," according to Mackenzie. His Lordship thought this a ridiculous reply for the mining inspector to make, and he could not understand the official saying such a thing. Accordingly, His Lordship questioned Mr. Mackenzie as to details, and it developed that at an inquest Mr. Mackenzie had risen and addressed Mr. Cole, asking to be allowed to ask some questions. Mr. Cole had rightly pointed out that he had no jurisdiction in the matter in the court and directed Mr. Mackenzie to the coroner in charge. "I am sorry," said His Lordship to Mackenzie, "that you misled me. I do not want to be misled, and it was not fair of you to leave such a wrong impression." The witness said he was sorry if he had left a wrong impression as he had not intended to do so. Witness was in some clashes with Mr. Slaght, counsel for the Hollinger, and also aroused some comment from Mr. Peter White, K.C., the commission counsel. At the conclusion of his evidence, His Lordship gave Mr. Mackenzie some good advice. He told him that while he had been fair in

his evidence in great part, there were times when he allowed his temper to get the upper hand. "You want to give that active mind of yours a sedative," His Lordship commented. Norman Johns, transportation boss, told of rubbish having been dumped into 55A up to the time of the fire. He told Mr. White that the place seemed all right and he had not foreseen any danger. He had not discussed the question with others, but followed routine. Cars could be pushed only fifty or sixty feet in the stope and then the man could get inside and throw the rubbish down farther.

Wasyf Duehuk, a switchman, said that for sixteen months he had dumped rubbish into stope 55A. W. Leblanc had told him where to dump the stuff. He had shovelled sawdust from the ear into the stope. He had been too busy to look into the stope and size things up much, he told Mr. White. To His Lordship the witness said he had not dumped rubbish into other stopes. Sometimes he thought this dumping of rubbish might be dangerous but he had said nothing to anybody because he did not feel it was any of his business.

Dick Guidice said that in accordance with orders he had dumped rubbish into 55A. He did not think it would catch fire and had not considered it a menace.

F. Poulin, timber boss, told the court that raises and manways were available for the men to get out of the mine if they knew how to get to them. In reply to His Lordship he agreed that it was largely a matter of luck. He told of the work he had taken in with the rescue crew after the disaster. He said that he had found four bodies at one time and thirteen at another. He had worked without a mask, but protected at the mouth by a bunch of cotton. He told Mr. White that he thought men equipped with the Toronto Consumers' Gas Co. apparatus could have done good work. He thought it might help in future if such equipment was available, but considered that this was a matter for the management. He said that broken timbers were placed in cars and sent up to surface. A clean-up crew under Paul Richer had charge of this work which was supposed to be done every night.

Leonard Bound, shift boss, agreed with the evidence of Mr. Poulin, saying that he had followed this method when he was transportation boss under Capt. Pond. Mr. Bound thought

the dumping of waste not dangerous if mixed with "backfill." David Moffatt, formerly at the Hollinger, but now running a farm in Mountjoy township, declared that quite a bit of cull timber had been dumped in one of the stopes when he was at the mine. He said that he had not given any serious thought to the matter of the waste from the powder house, and he had dumped this waste in different stopes, though not in 55A. He had heard of rubbish being dumped in the mine for considerable time, but thought it was every man to his own work. He had not reported the matter, but when the fire had occurred it came to his mind at once that it would be from stope 55A.

James Canning told the commission of the resolution passed at an I.W.W. meeting in March, 1925, dealing with conditions in the stopes. The resolution referred to conditions as injurious to health and dangerous for fire. To Mr. Slaght he agreed that the resolution chiefly dealt or concerned toilet boxes and old timbers.

Brief evidence was also given by Messrs Roseoe, McLaren and Mittanen.

Mr. Slaght agreed to secure if possible a circular letter asserted to have been signed by Mr. Brigham and issued in the summer of 1926. This circular letter, it is suggested, dealt with the disposal of rubbish at the mine. Mr. Slaght also promised to enquire if there were any written reports on file from the safety engineer.

Thursday's session was taken up with the examination of George Craig, safety engineer, and Richard Delahunt, foreman of the production department in levels down to 2,000 feet. Both the counsel, Mr. White, and the commissioner, Judge Godson, expressed dissatisfaction with the answers of these two witnesses as not frank enough nor backed by as complete a knowledge and responsibility as desired.

R. Delahunt in answer to Mr. White said he had been three years at Queen's University. He said he gives orders to the transportation bosses and is responsible to Mr. Dougherty for efficient transportation work. It was necessary to move the waste from the powder thaw house on the 550 level and he thought that it was taken out by the motor crews and dumped in stopes where back-filling was in progress. He did not remember having made enquiry, and thought the rubbish was being dumped in the usual way. He said he did not know exactly where it had been going. They were given different stopes on different levels in which to dump mine rock, and he agreed that it was his business to keep in touch with this work, of which a record was kept daily. There was no record of the thaw house waste. He would know from the records when no back-filling was going on in the stopes, and in answer to the commissioner he said that the motor-men probably got instructions from the transportation bosses. "Could they dump it where they liked?" he was asked. "Naturally they dumped it in some of the stopes where back-filling was going on," he replied. He said that no orders had been given to him in that respect, and it went on just as it had been before his time. Had he known what was being done he thought he would have reported it to either Mr. Dougherty, Mr. Emery or the safety engineer. He told Mr. White that he did not remember Mr. Dougherty giving him any instructions in the matter. When pressed further, he said Mr. Dougherty had not instructed him in the matter. The transportation boss followed precedent, he said, and so far as he knew the dumping was according to schedule. His Lordship questioned the witness as to who gave him his instructions, and urged him to speak freely and frankly.

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Geo. Craig told the commissioner that he did not know that stope 55A, where the fatal fire occurred, was an empty stope. He said it had not been worked while he was there. Asked by Mr. White if he had not made enquiries as to what was done with the powder house waste, he said that the Hollinger was a big mine and he had a lot to look after and the matter of the waste got away from him. Witness said he had been safety inspector since 1926. His duties were to record accidents and to take any steps he could to prevent accidents. He made inspections of the mine and sometimes accompanied the mining inspector on his inspection. In a mine like the Hollinger where it was damp, the question of fire hazard was not as much in the forefront as it would be elsewhere, he told Mr. White. He said he was conversant with the provisions of the Mining Act which prohibited the storing underground of used timber and of allowing it to decay below ground. "That is because of the danger of fire, isn't it?" suggested Mr. White. "It doesn't say so," the witness replied, but after Mr. White had read the section of the act he said that this must be the meaning all right. Craig said that sawdust would be as bad or worse than timber, especially in conjunction with wax papers. "A highly dangerous practice!" said Mr. White. The witness replied that from the experience recently it was. Had he known what was being done with the rubbish, he said, he would

have reported it to V. H. Emery, the mine superintendent. Apart from fuses and detonators, the powder house waste was as dangerous as anything going into the mine. He had made no enquiry regarding the disposal of the thaw house waste, he repeated, adding that Tom Lark, the previous occupant of his place, told him that to inspect the powder magazine daily and see that the temperature there is kept right was about as far as that part of his job was concerned. Mr. White suggested that neither Craig nor Lark could have taken their duties seriously enough. Witness said he took it seriously, especially in regard to the powder magazine. He said he had believed that the thaw house waste was going in with the back-filling. The only information he got on the job was from Lark who accompanied him for a couple of days when he started. If he found a man not carrying out instructions regarding safety measures, the witness said he took the matter up with the foreman concerned. On occasion men had been discharged for disregard of safety measures. He had been appointed by Mr. Emery, but had not been specially instructed by Mr. Emery or anyone else.

Further reference to the evidence at the enquiry will be found elsewhere in this issue.

Student (being arrested)—But, officer, I'm a student!
Officer—Ignorance is no excuse. —Exchange



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