

MAJOR TESTIFIES AT FIRE INQUEST

Complaint Made as to Smoke, Not Danger of Burning Grain Debris, Albee Says.

HEARING RESUMED TODAY

Chief Dowell Is of Belief Refuse Did Not Start Northwest Door Company Blaze—Members Ferryboat Crew Witnesses.

Having heard Mayor Albee, Fire Chief Dowell, Assistant Chief Laudenklos, Battalion Chief Stevens and others tell what they know of the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the death of two employees while trying to escape from the Northwest Door Company fire last Wednesday, the Coroner's inquest adjourned last night to reconvene again at 3:30 P. M. today. The two men killed in the fire are William Starling and Alex Balogh.

Mayor Albee was the most prominent witness before yesterday's session, but his testimony gave the least actual information of events not already given to the jury by other witnesses. His testimony was punctuated by clashes between him and Deputy District Attorney Robison.

Mayor Albee gave his address as 1640 East Ankeny street, and on being asked his occupation, replied "Mayor." He said he was familiar with the ground covered by the grain burning, and had been over the ground once since the dock fire of March 12. This visit, he said, was two weeks ago, and was out of curiosity, because he had not seen the debris of the dock fire and wished to see it. His chauffeur was the only person with him. He said he walked over the area, burned, found it was moldering and smelling, and found two men on guard at the fires. He was there but five minutes, he said.

Mayor Tells of Investigation.

He told of the permission given Allen & Lewis to burn the grain thus: "In the latter part of April and the first of May we received several complaints, chiefly about the smoke arising from the grain, and there were complaints from Mr. Greer, of Allen & Lewis, asked me for permission to burn the grain. I refused permission until I had investigated the circumstances. I talked to Commissioner Daly, and he said that it would be impossible to burn the grain in the stream, because the grain packed, and produced explosions. I then talked to Chief Dowell, of the Fire Department, Assistant Chief Laudenklos and Battalion Chief Stevens, and they agreed that the best and only feasible way to get rid of the grain was to burn it. It had already begun to sour, and there were complaints about it. So I called up Allen & Lewis, and told them to go ahead and burn the grain. I don't know exactly with whom I talked, but I think it was L. O. Ross."

"Is there any law or provision of the city charter which says that burning of debris can be done only by written permission of city officials?" asked Robison.

"None that I know of," replied the Mayor. He went on to say that in case of small fires, the procedure had been for captains in fire districts to authorize such fires. The permission he gave was verbal.

Witnesses' Testimony Conflicts.

Talking on the possible danger of the fires in the grain, Robison asked Mayor Albee if he had talked to the danger, or the method of building the fires. "Mr. Greer said that if necessary, they would use oil to start the fires," replied Mr. Albee. "I talked with Chief Laudenklos, who has the district in which the fire was, but he said nothing to me about the danger, or about the time it would take to burn the grain." Laudenklos, on a previous day's hearing, testified that he told Mayor Albee it would take six months to burn the grain.

"I want it made plain," continued Mayor Albee, turning to the reporters' table, "that neither by direct statement, nor by inference was there any report made to me of the danger of burning the grain. I have spoken to the heads of the city bureau and I find that nothing was said to me of the danger, and the only report against the burning was because of the smoke and odor."

"Did Mr. Warren, your secretary, tell you that Sam Connell, manager of the Northwest Door Company, had gone to the City Hall twice to ask you of the danger?" asked Robison.

Mr. Connell's Visit Mentioned.

"No," replied Mr. Albee. "Mr. Warren said that Mr. Connell had come to see me, but had said to neither of us I was busy, and had merely protested against the smoke."

Asked as to the alleged conversation in which Robison thought Laudenklos spoke to Mr. Albee of the danger of the fire, Mr. Albee said that Chief Laudenklos spoke to him of one box which had been rung in, but Laudenklos said he did not think it was a necessary alarm, though he answered it with apparatus. Dr. Marcelus, head of the health bureau, said Mayor Albee, advised him that it was better to burn the grain than leave it on the ground to sour.

"I never heard the word danger used in connection with this fire," said Mayor Albee. "The burning was the least of the evils, burning the grain to lie and ferment, or shoveling it off into the river."

Mayor Albee explained the incident referred to, in which a fire company damped the grain in the grain, and because someone turned in a fire alarm and not to controvert his permission to burn the grain.

Mayor Albee made it plain that the complaints to him were as to the annoyance of the smoke and odor and not on the danger of fire.

At one point he broke forth with: "Would you take time to go and play fireman when you have men trained to do it? It is strange that you can't detect the difference between smoke and danger." A moment later he said: "Are you trying to make this thing sound a certain way, or are you trying to get at the facts?"

"I was sent by my chief to get the facts," said Mr. Robison in reply, "and I am setting them, and I will continue to get them in just this way."

The crowd applauded and cheered while Mayor Albee said: "Why, certainly."

Returning to the number of fire permits given for the destruction of debris, Mayor Albee said that the Allen &

Lewis permit was the only one he remembered to have given. All other permits, he said, were granted through the regular channels in the Fire Bureau. He said he did not remember the details of ordinance No. 24014, which says that the fire permits shall be issued by the Chief of the Fire Bureau and may be revoked by any fire warden if the fire seems dangerous.

W. P. La Roche, City Attorney, accompanied Mayor Albee and Secretary Warren to the inquest. And several times interposed to straighten out tangles in testimony.

Chief Dowell, of the Fire Bureau, with his objection from a fire warden, told of the usual methods of securing permits to burn refuse. He said he did not remember any other occasion when the Mayor had given a permit to anyone to burn debris.

Dowell Explains His Position.

"Captain Laudenklos' friends lived near the scene of the fire and they would not let it out," Chief Dowell said. "My folks did not live anywhere near it, and so I didn't want it put out."

Chief Stevens also, he said, wished to extinguish the fire and have done with it, but Chief Dowell said: "I want to help those grain fellows out, and I stalled Laudenklos' friends to keep them from putting out the fire."

Chief Dowell said he did not think the fire caught from the grain piles at all. He said he first saw it burning rapidly in the office of the mill and the later admitted that several men directly across the ferry slip from the burning grain.

"We talked it over, the other chiefs and I, but there was not a hint of any danger in it," he said. "We conferred also with the Mayor and nothing was said of the danger."

Hypothetical Question Answered.

All the fire department officials called were asked a hypothetical question by Mr. Robison: "If you were Chief of the city, knowing what you did about the fire and its danger, would you have issued a permit?"

All said that they would, with the exception of Assistant Chief Laudenklos.

When Chief Dowell was asked if it were a difference of opinion, then, between himself and Chief Laudenklos, he said: "Well, Mike got tired of taking Engine 8 down to the place and he wanted to put it out."

Jay Stevens, chief, said that there was no hint of danger to persons or property in the grain fire, and that he had used his influence to have it abated.

Mr. Stevens said his suggestion of a fireproof house, with oil on the grain and a forced draft to burn it, was not followed. Asked if it were feasible, he said he thought so, but as far as he knew it had not been tried thoroughly at any time.

W. H. Warren, secretary to Mayor Albee, confirmed his chief's story of the conversations with Sam Connell, and said he knew nothing about the thing as any one, he said.

Lucius Allen Lewis, head of the Lewis Investment Company, who lives at 206 Park avenue, said his subordinates took all the details of the burning on themselves and he knew very little about them.

Two Ferry Captains Testify.

The crew of the ferryboat Mason were witnesses during both the morning and afternoon sessions. They testified that the fire broke out on the morning of the fire. Previous witnesses had said that they failed to turn back or attempt to otherwise save the lives of the two drowned men.

Captain Henry Van Auken, the regular master of the boat, who was not on duty at the time of the fire, said that he could not understand why the crew of the boat had not assisted in saving the lives of the two men. He said that boat drills and other lifesaving preparations were part of the duties of the crew, and had been carried out under his orders.

Captain Dan Brunger, of 390 Palling street, who was substitute captain of the ferry at the time of the fire, said that he had not understood why the man of the three on the mill dock jump to the top of the women's cabin of the ferry. He said he had no natural curiosity, and said he did not look back after the boat had got out into the middle of the stream.

Safety of Passengers Sought.

Asked if the ferryboat, which he declared he wished to save, was heated by steam at all by the fire, Captain Brunger replied that it was not.

"I wanted to save my passengers," he said.

His testimony was to the effect that the crew were nearly the sole persons on the ferry in its trip to the West Side away from the burning buildings.

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QUORUM OF 33,053 SHARES FOR CASHIER COMPANY

Only 33,053 of 59,600 Shares of Stock Represented at Stockholders' Meeting.

SOME HARSH WORDS PASS

Hints at "Deal" and "Whitewash" Are Met by Counter Assurances by Officers That Concern's Affairs Are Healthy.

Failing by a big margin of having a quorum of stock represented, the annual stockholders' meeting of the United States Cashier Company, at the Y. M. C. A. yesterday, resolved itself into an unofficial gathering, which heard the annual report of President Frank Menefee, discussed the affairs of the company and adjourned to meet within 90 days, at the call of the president and the board of directors.

There were 33,053 shares of stock represented, while 59,600 would have been a quorum.

Several stockholders hinted at connivance among some of the larger stockholders to prevent a quorum to the election could not be held and the present officers thus be continued. It was suggested that at the next meeting a statement of stock holdings be presented, so that it may be determined what stockholders are not represented.

President Menefee, director, E. M. Mears and W. M. Cake, attorney for the company, all assured the meeting that there was nothing on which to base a suspicion of a "deal."

The closing moments of the meeting were disturbed by a stockholder who demanded of Director Mears in a loud voice how he got his stock. Mr. Mears had said he was perhaps the largest holder of company stock.

"How did you get it?" asked the stockholder, angrily. "Did you get it like the stories printed in the papers said you did? If you did, it's a pretty nice little poor devil putting in our money against that sort of thing."

Mr. Mears indignantly denied the truth of charges filed in United States District Court, in the suit of W. Lepper, a Montana stockholder, against the company, its president and directors, which were the basis of the newspaper story relating to his connection with the company.

"That's a lie," he said. "The only mistake the company made is that I didn't make you a director, and then everything would have been all right."

Another little storm was in progress at the same time, over the motion of J. L. Stockton to tender a vote of confidence in the officers and directors of the company.

W. Orton objected strenuously, saying that, while he hoped everything was all right, he was opposed to a "whitewash" of the officers and directors.

A request for an itemized financial statement from the company was said by several stockholders, but President Menefee objected, saying it would be unadvisable at this time, with the company attacked in court.

Mr. Cake called on Attorney Mears to sustain him in this attitude, and Mr. Cake said it would be folly to disclose the company's case to its enemies.

Two other matters were brought up, one of which was the resignation of one of the directors, and the other was the resignation of one of the directors.

President Menefee, in his annual report, told how the North American agents and the company's dies and machinery had been transferred to a new company in Indiana with an authorized capitalization of \$2,000,000, of which \$1,276,000 worth of stock would be issued. Of this \$900,000 worth had been given the Oregon company for its assets and machinery, he said, and this amount of stock, when the debts of the Oregon company had been paid, would be reduced to about \$750,000, which would represent the Oregon company's interest in the Indiana company and constitute a majority of the issued stock of the latter.

Mr. Menefee, Director Mears and Attorney Cake applauded the directors in transferring the company to Indiana. "I was not carrying a tool chest, walking along the river front, and making use in the Middle West," Mears said. One of the machines used in the rear of the hall in which the meeting was held.

COWAN MAKES DENIAL

STATMENTS OF DR. C. A. PRYOR REPUTED WITH DOCUMENTS. Money and Property in Dispute Were Returned to Head of El Paso Film Company, Is Allegation.

In refutation of statements made by Dr. Charles A. Pryor, head of an El Paso, Tex., film company, L. F. Cowan, through his attorney, R. W. Wilbur, made a statement yesterday and supported it by original documents.

Dr. Charles A. Pryor, now Mr. F. Cowan, was divorced from Sam J. Raber in Missoula, Mont., June 27, 1911, and was married in the same month in Walla Walla to Mr. Cowan by Rev. Raymond C. Brooks. They are now living in Portland.

Mr. Cowan denies Dr. Pryor's statement that he is a cabaret entertainer. He says he is a graduate of Iowa State College and the University of Wisconsin, a member of Kappa Sigma fraternity and a civil engineer.

All money or other property, said Mr. Cowan, over which there was any dispute between him and Dr. Pryor, was returned to Dr. Pryor. He denies ever having received the property which Dr. Pryor alleges he received, and says that, as a matter of fact, he put up the \$1,000 cash bail on which Dr. Pryor obtained his release from jail on a San Francisco charge, and was dismissed.

The transactions mentioned by Dr. Pryor, said Mr. Cowan, were on account of property deals completed in San Francisco and recorded there prior to the Portland trip.

When released from the city jail Saturday after being locked up over night when Mr. Cowan surrendered to him as a bondman, Dr. Pryor alleged that Mr. Cowan had transferred his property. This Mr. Cowan denies.

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