

Sandhogs go through pressure chamber to avoid occupational hazard—the "bends."



Gaping cavern dwarfs men who made it, swallows them up in eerie darkness.



Deep inside, sandhogs lay new track flush against mountain of earth that flatcars must haul away.



toughest job

Three Lions Photos

THE SANDHOG may wonder how he got his name. He spends most of his working day half-buried in mud, and the only thing he hogs is fresh air. There's no job muckier than sandhogging and few as dangerous. Hazards of collapse or seepage are constant, and, because tunnels are dug under pressure, the peculiar peril of accelerated decompression (the "bends") is always lurking. Modern machinery has improved tunnel construction since the pick-and-shovel days, but none has been found to replace the hardy sandhog who still sloughs around up to his hips in mud, digging his way to daylight.

on earth



Working in mud and misty light, broad-shouldered sandhogs dig their hole to size, then carefully lay sections of steel ring (foreground), lock them in place, and dig on.