

SHELL-LOADING PLANT BURNED

Spark From Electric Switch Possible Cause; Tremendous Explosions Follow

LOSS MAY REACH \$200,000

Five Hundred Operators Take Refuge in Woods, but Shrapnel Spatters These.

(Canadian Press Despatch.)

Montreal, Oct. 26.—Explosions and fire destroyed seven buildings of the Canadian Explosives, Limited, at Ile Perrot, near Vaudreuil, Que., this morning, but fortunately there was no loss of life, and only two persons were hurt, neither of them seriously. Early reports as to the loss being one of a million dollars were greatly exaggerated, and to-night it was stated that it would probably not exceed \$200,000, if as high as this. The explosions followed a fire which started in the shell-filling house of the assembling plant, and they continued at intervals throughout the day until about 6 o'clock. Among the buildings destroyed were the shell-filling house, the assembling house, the storehouse, and smaller structures, all having been constructed of flimsy materials, as is usual at such plants.

There are 500 employees of the company, 400 of whom are boys, girls and women. The injured employees are Paul Ladouceur, aged 53, of Ste. Anne de Bellevue, who is suffering from some broken ribs, and J. Montpetit, 20 years old, of Ile Perrot, burned about the face and hands.

Boy's Rumored Warning.

The cause of the explosion is not definitely known. Two French-Canadians say that, on crossing the river to Vaudreuil, which is opposite Ile Perrot, last night, a boy advised them not to go to work in the plant of the Canadian Explosives, Limited, to-day, as the plant was going up in the air. They do not know the name of the boy, but undertook this afternoon to try to locate him. Wm. Kelly, assistant to the President of the Canadian Explosives, Limited, is disinclined to believe that **alien enemies** had anything to do with the explosion. He could not say what had caused it.

Some Blame Electric Spark.

Some of the employees say it was due to an electric spark from a switch flying into some powder in a partially-filled shell. Had it not been for the remarkable coolness and courage of Superintendent H. H. Hutchinson and his assistant, Mr. Ardell, the fire would have extended, and the resultant explosions would probably have caused a much greater loss.

"We expect to be operating again in about ten days," said Mr. Kelly to-night.

Tremendous Explosions.

The fire began at 7 this morning, just after the hands had begun work. The first explosion wrecked the part of the plant where it occurred, and the high wind threw burning fragments to adjoining buildings and store rooms. In the latter were stored a large number of loaded shells and a quantity of powder. These exploded with tremendous detonations, which were heard miles away. The exploding shrapnel spattered the woods nearby, in which the operatives had taken refuge, and many of them had narrow escapes. Windows in farm houses within a radius of three miles were broken.

Help in the form of fire engines and hose was rushed from Montreal, but the burning plant could not be saved, and was practically consumed to the ground by the flames.

Trains Held Up.

All trains on the Grand Trunk and Canadian Pacific, whose lines between Montreal and Ottawa pass some distance from the scene of the fire, were held up as a precautionary measure for two hours, though the tracks were not injured.

The Fire Brigade of the Canadian Explosives plant tried to cope with the situation, but the steam pumping house soon caught fire and the water tank ran dry shortly after the first explosion occurred.

Train Crew's Bravery.

An act of gallantry was performed by a C. P. R. switch crew, comprised of Engineer J. Pumble, Conductor S. Brandford, Fireman E. Gauthier and Brakemen Sproule and T. J. Boulger. They ran their train close to the blazing storehouse, coupled onto a train loaded with completed shells and pulled them to a place of safety.

This crew also removed twenty cars of miscellaneous material, and took in empty cars so that additional material could be loaded.

All the time powder and shells were exploding, some shells being hurled into the River St. Lawrence and bursting amidst a tower of spray.

clared that the Soldiers' and Workmen's organization hitherto had contented itself with a defensive attitude against the Provisional Government, but that it now must take the offensive. He accused the Government of planning to leave Petrograd at a moment of peril. "The Soldiers' and Workmen's Deputies will not leave," he concluded. "They will fight, if necessary, to the very death, in Petrograd, the heart of the revolution."