

# INQUEST ON VICTIMS OF FERNIE DISASTER

## Five Witnesses Examined State Mine Was Not What Could Be Called Gaseous

Fernie, B.C., April 19.—The inquest over the victims of the Coal Creek mining disaster opened here this afternoon. A change of coroners was made necessary by the fact that Coroner Wilkes was employed by the coal company as check weighman at the Coal Creek mines. Coroner A. C. Murray, of Natal, B.C., is here, and now has charge of the investigation.

Only five of the twenty-two witnesses were examined this afternoon. The witnesses called upon were Harry Heigh, Oliver Whissanley, John Griffith, Joe Lane and Tom Sims. These men stated that the mine was not what could be termed gaseous, but that they had encountered caps of gas on several occasions. On being questioned as to whether the mine could be termed "wet," all except Harry Heigh, who said that at times the mine was "damp," but could not be called "wet," stated that the mine was not "wet."

Tom Sims stated that during his experience in mining he had never worked in a better mine than No. 3 Coal Creek.

This concluded the afternoon session and the coroner adjourned the investigation until tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock.

Notices were posted last night and this morning by the Crow's Pass Coal company that the mines would be open for work commencing with the 11 p.m. shift last night, but there was no response, and the mines are still idle and a strike is virtually on. The men are determined to stay out until their new agreement is signed.

The rescue work in No. 3 mine has been abandoned, the rescue parties coming to a complete barrier of rock which made further search for the remaining twelve bodies yet to be recovered impossible. After a consultation between officials, mine inspectors and pit bosses it was decided to restart from the entrance of the mine and clean out the caves and repair it thoroughly for resumption of coal producing operations. This work will take several months and not before this work is completed will the remaining bodies be recovered.