

MINE WAS AFIRE IN SIX PLACES

**Many Witnesses at Fernie Sure
Mine Was Full of Flame
Following the Ex-
plosion.**

**JURY, HOWEVER, HAS
EXONERATED COMPANY**

**Several Relatives of Lost Bread-
Earners Are in Dis-
tress.**

FERNIE, May 9.—Several months will elapse before the heavy rock falls resulting from the explosion in the Coal Creek mine on April 5 will be removed and the mine placed in operation again according to the statement of mining officials connected with the recent investigation conducted by Mr. James Ashworth, acting under instructions from Hon. Wm. Sloan, minister of mines. The investigation showed that the explosion was caused by gas and dust and that the mine was aflame from one end to the other.

The disaster has had a demoralizing effect on business here. The strike and the closing of the mine has resulted in upwards of 200 men being thrown out of employment and the absence of the payroll has been sadly felt by local merchants. There are a number of families which have lost their bread winners in the explosion but these are being looked after. Collections have been made on more than one occasion and a goodly sum raised for relief work. A collector recently found one family with nothing but a five-cent piece in its possession with which to buy food. A generous cheque was at once forwarded to the widow along with a well-filled hamper.

Bodies Still in Mine.

The bodies of some twelve miners are still in the mine and some of the miners are working three shifts in an effort to locate these bodies. With the exception of these men who are cleaning up about the mine and who are trying to find the bodies, everything about the mine is idle. There has been considerable criticism of the company since the explosion, emanating chiefly from those families unfortunate enough to have relatives killed in the disaster. It is noteworthy that no less than three different deputations of miners have been sent to interview the mine officials and to make an investigation into the steps taken by the company to have the bodies recovered. Each of the three deputations has left the company's offices thoroughly convinced that nothing more could have been done to liberate the miners and bring the bodies to the surface.

Urge Single Shift.

The verdict of the jury inquiring into the death of the miners at the inquest held on April 24 showed that no blame was attached to the company. The verdict read as follows: "John Monks and others came to their death at Coal Creek on April 5, the jury finding that these men met death by an explosion the first cause of which is unknown to us. By the evidence adduced we, however, would recommend that a single shift, if practicable, would be a great factor in preventing an explosion such as this."

Many witnesses were called at the investigation conducted by Mr. Ashworth and all agreed that the mine was full of flame following the explosion, which was undoubtedly caused by gas and dust in the mine. Evidence also showed that the mine was on fire in no less than six places. There was absolute proof that there was an intense flame in the mine from the condition of a number of the bodies.

There is little hope of a settlement of the strike among the miners here at the present time at least and many are leaving for other parts of Canada. Several have moved with their families to the Pacific Coast and are now working in the mines on Vancouver Island. Others have moved east and have secured work in mines as far east as Nova Scotia.

Mr. James Ashworth has returned to the city after having conducted the investigation into the mine explosion. Interviewed by The World this morning he stated that until he had made out his official report for the government he would not be in a position to make a public statement. He went so far as to state, however, that in his opinion the immediate cause of the explosion was gas and dust and that the mine was aflame from one end to the other following the explosion.