

I THINK IF IT IS SATISFACTORY TO THE COURT WE WILL NOT CALL THE OTHER TWO WITNESSES NOW, CASIEREC AND WEISEHAUT, BUT WOULD LIKE TO RESERVE THE RIGHT TO CALL THEM TO REFUTE ANY EVIDENCE BROUGHT OUT BY THE DEFENCE.

THE DEFENDING OFFICER STATED THAT HE WOULD LIKE THE PRIVILEGE OF CALLING THESE TWO WITNESSES AS WITNESSES FOR THE DEFENCE.

THIS WAS AGREED TO BY THE COURT

THE PROSECUTION IS CLOSED

- D E F E N C E -

FIRST WITNESS

The accused, B.83934 Cpl (A/Sjt) ELDRIDGE, T.W.M., CCOD, having been duly sworn, states:

Sir, in the first place I feel very keenly of the position in which I find myself, having served 25 years on a Fire Dept with a very excellent record, attaining the rank of a Capt, and then enlisting the first week of the war with one idea in mind, to come over here and start in where we left off in 1918, and owing to my age I was sent back to the RU and then detailed by CRU to take over AD duties which I have endeavoured to carry out up until this incident, to the best of my ability. It was through my initiative that the present fire station which I work out of was built. I organized and put into shape an organization which has been very favourably commented upon by various offrs and at different times. The area is a large area, including actually 4 units mostly concerning workshops, warehouses, veh parks and salvage. When I first went there a year ago last Jan I had a staff of over 23 men including 4 NCOs. I had no difficulty at that time in carrying out the duties which I was supposed to carry out, but as time went on various HUs called these men back for service with their units, others were sent home on account of their category, until the staff was depleted of all NCOs and I had 5 men left. I think the Court can quite realize how much work that meant for me with 5 men. It meant that I could not take a day off and I had to work Sat and Sun as well as week days and the only time I had off was my privilege leaves. Now there are 1100 and some odd fire extinguishers which must be examined and tested at least once a month according to a CRU order, there are 812 fire points including stirrup pumos, which must be tested once a week. In spite of the depleted staff this was carried out. I made several complaints at various times to the CO and the 2 IC in regard to the small staff and they endeavoured to do all they could to get more men but they failed to get any. There have been various ADOs who have been assigned as AD offrs but in every case there was not one of these offrs who was trained in AD work and in every case they told me so themselves and left the job to me. Now, when the boys went to France I got the idea again that I should go to. I approached my CO and I also approached other offrs with a view to getting back to the Holding Unit and going to France. I did this because I found out men whom I knew were just as old as I and who had already gone. This made me somewhat discontented. Now, coupled with that I am a married man and I've 3 children of a family in Toronto, Canada. I've not heard from my wife in over 4 1/2 yrs and I've property there which I am concerned about and have not been able to receive any information as to what the condition of it is. Coupled with that I got a letter from my sister which really had a great deal to do with the position I now find myself in. It is dated 16 Aug 44 and it reads as follows: in part: "Now Mel I have some news which you will hear sooner or later, but I haven't told Mom as yet. Several months ago not long after Tom was home the Hardie Groceries on Bloor was robbed, also a truck owned by Mr Albert and police picked Tom up right in the doorway of the groceries and the rest got away as per usual. Well