

Explosives Act

Mr. Adamson: Therefore this act has really nothing to do with the major use of explosives in Canada?

Mr. Prudham: Not when the provincial government has made provisions.

Mr. Adamson: Are there any provincial governments that do not have a mines act?

Mr. Prudham: Our department inspects mine magazines in New Brunswick and Newfoundland by invitation.

Mr. Adamson: Mr. Chairman, I want to ask one more question about the percentage of nitroglycerin or gelignite or the so-called safe explosives used especially in the coal mining industry. In that industry explosives are used which have a low concentration of nitroglycerin or a low explosive content or flash point. They are especially designed so as not to cause fire in coal mines. Can the minister say what the composition of such explosives is?

Mr. Prudham: In addition to standard explosives, certain explosives are designed for specific purposes. The hon. member has asked for percentages but I am afraid I cannot give him that, though I would be glad to pass on the information later.

Mr. Adamson: I rather wondered about that because there has been an alteration recently in the United Kingdom standards as regards underground explosives, and I wondered whether some similar action was contemplated here.

Mr. Prudham: We are really prohibited by the act from giving that kind of information. I would refer the hon. member to section 25 regarding the disclosure of confidential information, which states:

Any person employed under this act who without due authority from the minister discloses any confidential information is guilty of an offence . . .

Mr. Adamson: But surely the content of explosives which is designated—

Mr. Prudham: Manufacturers have their own formulae.

Mr. Adamson: I realize that, but surely in this act there must be overriding regulations which limit the percentage and govern the quantity of nitroglycerin in any explosive used underground.

Mr. Prudham: Every explosive is tested on its merits. Each manufacturer would have his own formulae, which would be tested and certified on performance.

Mr. Adamson: But in this act then there is no limitation as to the concentration of the active blasting element in an explosive?

Mr. Prudham: No; each manufacturer submits his own sample. I had a man in my office a couple of weeks ago who claimed he had an entirely new formula which would revolutionize the explosives business, and we have asked him to submit samples, which he has not done as yet. He may not have any nitroglycerin in his explosive, but I do not know.

The Chairman: Shall clause 4 carry?

Some hon. Members: Carried.

Mr. Nowlan: I have one question which perhaps the minister has already dealt with but if so I did not hear him and I would like to put it again. Perhaps he dealt with it in answer to my hon. friend from York West. Two or three years ago there was a factory near Halifax engaged in the manufacture of dynamite. After it had been closed down for some years there was an explosion there. Perhaps the minister's officials would be conversant with the details. Some men were around at the time, out hunting as a matter of fact, and there was a dreadful explosion in which they were blown to pieces and everything there was shattered. Apparently there had been a certain amount of dynamite left there in storage. It had been there for years, had deteriorated and gas had generated with the result that the explosion took place. A very close personal friend of mine was killed there at that time.

I want to know whether such a matter would come under the control of this department. Was there no control in that case, or what was done to inspect such premises and thus prevent the explosion taking place?

Mr. Prudham: I understand it would come under this department. That particular case was investigated, and the report is available if the hon. member would like a copy.

Mr. Nowlan: Are inspections carried out from time to time by the minister's department in regard to factories where such explosives are stored? How long before this explosion took place had that particular factory been inspected?

Mr. Prudham: Mr. Chairman, in that particular instance the factory had not been operating since this act came into force. Had it been a factory during the life of this act we would have inspected it.

Mr. Nowlan: So no inspection had taken place at that time

Mr. Prudham: No.

The Chairman: Shall clause 4 carry?