

REPORT ON HALIFAX DISASTER

Mr. J. B. Laidlaw Says Damage Not as Great as First Reported

Mr. J. B. Laidlaw, manager for Canada of the Norwich Union Fire Insurance Society, has issued a statement in connection with the Halifax disaster. After describing the movements in the harbor of the munitions steamer and the Belgian relief steamer, and the explosion following the collision, he says:—

Those on the docks or on the shore or in buildings near by, and those on the deck of the Imo across the channel, were instantly killed, and on the sloping ground of Halifax, which rises from the shore to a height of about 300 ft., covered with detached dwellings, occupied principally by a good class of working people, the buildings were demolished, most of them being laid flat on the ground, with the wood frequently broken into fragments. The force of the explosion was so intense that a wave, which in the Narrows was said to be 30 ft. high, swept the docks and the shore, a number of people losing their lives or being washed into the sea by this wave.

Debris Caught Fire.

The debris of many of the dwellings which were shattered, caught fire from the stoves or furnaces overturned, but very fortunately most of these dwellings were detached, and there was no wind, so that a number of individual fires gradually burned themselves out, without the usual features of a conflagration with a hot blast carrying the flames to other sections. It was only by the greatest good luck that the whole city of Halifax was saved from destruction.

Beyond the top of the hill the shattering of buildings was much less, in some cases only the roof and chimneys being knocked off; others with bay windows blown in, and occasionally a building would be moved a few inches on its foundations. Practically all the buildings in that portion of Halifax were of wooden construction, and, indeed, the whole city is built of wood, with the exception of the business centre, where nearly all the buildings are of brick or stone. In the section nearest to that which was quite annihilated, an occasional dwelling was burned. To the south, towards the centre of the city the effects of the explosion were almost entirely confined to the breaking of glass and occasional overturning of a projecting chimney; in a few instances, the roof of a church standing above the other buildings being destroyed.

Plate Glass Broken.

In the business centre, and, indeed, throughout the city, all the glass, including plate glass in shop windows, was destroyed, and the same was the case on the Dartmouth side of the harbor. In some cases of factories having very large windows, not only was the glass destroyed, but the framework of the window holding the glass was shattered. The glass in houses several miles away, around Bedford Basin, was destroyed, and windows were broken in a hotel at Truro, 60 miles distant, the upper part of which rose above the surrounding buildings, while the concussion was said to have been felt at Charlottetown, P.E.I., over 200 miles away. * * *

Throughout the city the collision and fire on the Mont Blanc, followed by the fire reels through the streets, caused those who had windows overlooking the harbor, to watch the developments. Those whose attention had not previously been attracted, were startled by the first explosion and instinctively turned to the window, so that when the great explosion followed within a few seconds, shattering the glass to fragments and driving it in some cases with such force as to have pieces of glass stick firmly into furniture and into plastered walls across the room, the flying glass caused many flesh wounds, more or less severe, and also entered into many eyes, with the result that over two hundred persons have lost their eyesight, while a larger number are under treatment with the hope that their sight may be saved. The loss of life definitely ascertained is upwards of 1,500 and there is hardly a family in Halifax which is not mourning someone.

The explosion overturned the gasometer of the gas works, two miles away, cutting off the supply of gas. The poles carrying the electric wires were snapped off at the ground like pipe stems, disorganizing the telephone and electric light service and that of the street cars, so that the ordinary means of communication were destroyed, and the greatest confusion prevailed throughout the city. * * *

The damage to property is not as great as at first reported, and will probably not exceed \$5,000,000. The value of property burned would not exceed \$2,000,000, including a cotton mill which was equipped with automatic sprinklers. The great tragedy of the Halifax disaster is the loss of life, the number of widows and orphans who have been left, and particularly the large number of those who have been blinded, and for them and their maintenance a large endowment fund should be provided. The tragedy is a direct result of Canada's participation in the war, and the assistance and maintenance of the survivors should be recognized as a liability of the people of Canada to those stricken in Halifax.

MUNICIPAL BOND MARKET

The Monetary Times' Weekly Register of Municipal Activities and Financing

Brantford, Ont.—Local improvement 20-year debentures of \$40,000, bearing interest at 5½ per cent. per annum, will be authorized.

Chatham, N.B.—J. A. Fowlie, town treasurer, reports the town's assessed value of real estate and personal property as follows: Real estate, \$1,044,900; personal property, \$246,300.

Charlotte, N.B.—H. F. Grimmer, secretary-treasurer, reports the county's assessed value of real estate and personal property as follows: Real estate, \$2,000,939; personal property, \$341,302.

Bromhead, Sask.—The village intends to borrow by way of debenture of \$1,000 for the purpose of drilling a well. Debenture repayable in ten equal consecutive annual instalments of principal, with interest not exceeding 8 per cent. per annum. Secretary-treasurer, P. H. Rockstad.

Hawarden, Sask.—The village intends to borrow by way of debenture \$3,000 for the purpose of drilling a well and acquiring nuisance ground. Debenture to be repayable in fifteen equal consecutive annual instalments of principal, with interest not exceeding 8 per cent. Secretary-treasurer, C. C. Stevens.

Quebec, Que.—As a result of the discussion of the budget for 1917-1918 at the meeting of the Catholic School Commissioners recently it was announced that the Quebec legislature would be requested to increase the school tax from four mills to six mills, and also to authorize the commissioners to float a loan of \$3,000,000.

Kincardine, N.B.—A by-law to raise by an issue of debentures \$17,000 to cover the work of repairs to bridges received its first and second readings at the monthly meeting of the town council, held recently. It will be submitted to the rate-payers at the municipal elections, in January, and a grant of \$75 to the fire department will be authorized.

Coteau St. Pierre, Que.—Tenders will be received up to January 8th, 1918, for the purchase of \$210,000 debentures in denominations of \$1,000 or \$500, and will be considered by the board at their meeting same day at 8 p.m. in their office, 56 Westminster Avenue, Montreal West. The lowest or any tender not necessarily accepted. G. F. Paterson, secretary-treasurer.

Windsor, Ont.—Mr. M. A. Dickinson, acting clerk, informs *The Monetary Times* that no tenders were received for \$255,834 local improvement debentures, and that the following blocks are still on the market: \$46,024.95, 5 per cent., local improvement, 20-years, annual instalment, semi-annual interest coupons; \$80,439.18, 5 per cent., local improvement, 10-years, annual instalment, semi-annual interest coupons; \$97,193.81, 5 per cent., local improvement, 10-years, annual instalment, semi-annual interest coupons; \$32,178, School, 5½ per cent., 30-years, annual instalment, semi-annual interest coupons.

Three Rivers, Que.—An issue of \$765,000 6 per cent bonds has been sold to Messrs. Hew R. Wood and Company, Montreal. The bonds are partly those of the city itself and part of those of the school commissioners, the respective amounts being \$280,000 and \$485,000. The sale was the result of private negotiations, no tenders having been called, but