MARITIME MINING RECORD.

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CONCERNING CERTAIN A.M.W. RESOLUTIONS.

Elsewhere, from the Sydney Post, we give two, what are termed startling resolutions passed at the late sessions of the new Miners' Society. The Record accepts the Posts' version of these as correct, as on the authority of the Glace Bay Gazette, the Post and the secretary of the society are very chummy these days, and have, therefore, friendly intercourse. It is said that the passing of the resolutions caused some little excitement in Sydney and the surrounding populous districts. And they have caused no little surprise on the Mainland as well. The surprise on the Mainland is due chiefly to the lack of comprehension of what is contained in the phrase "British fair play," so far at least as the second resolution is concerned. There is nothing British about it. The resolution adjudges certain men guilty of a very serious offence, who have not been given opportunity to state their case or in any way defend themselves.

The resolutions demanding the discharge of certain officials are based on a statement in the verdict returned at the coroner's inquest, and on one made by what the Record has termed "the Donkin inquiry." The Record, at this time, will not attempt any defence of the management of the Waterford Mine. The Record is not in a clear enough position to say a word either in condemnation or commendation of the management, for the simple reason that no evidence published has connected the two officials named with the causes leading to the disaster.

The Record has knowledge to the effect that the verdict of the jury published diverged in a very important particular from what may be termed the "draft" verdict. In the verdict as first drawn out the names of a number of officials, some higher and some lower, were given as entitled to severe censure. Why did the jury expunge those names from the verdict returned in court? Did the jurors, on second thoughts, realize that the evidence was too general to warrant them in connecting particular officials with blame? Had the jury evidence sufficient to show that the disaster was due to culpable negligence on the part of one or two minor officials? to lack of supervision and discipline on the part of some higher official? or to a woeful error of judgment on the part of the responsible management of the mine? If the jury had such evidence why were they not honest enough, and straightforward and courageous enough, to name the officials and point to the evidence which convicted them of either culpable negligence, or of unfitness for their positions owing to an inexcusable display of ignorance and incapacity? Was the jury in a position to assert beyond question where the accident happened, we mean the exact spot in the mine? Was the jury in a position to say that the ventilation in every part of the mine was wholly inadequate? To the first of these questions the Record affirms they were not, and this affirmation is made in face of the fact that the experts on the Donkin enquiry have given all but a definite opinion as to the exact place in which the explosion originated. The Donkin Commission said that no part of the force of the explosion had escaped by way of the shot hole; and that part had escaped as flame down through the cleavage, promoting a gas or a dust and gas explosion. The commission, in the Record's opinion, made here a vital omission necessary to a reasonable comprehension of the position. It failed to say whether the only partially effective shot had released a somwehat extensive pocket of gas, or whether, when the supposed firing of the shot took place, there was gas in the place with which the flame of the shot could communicate. If the latter, the question arises, How came it there? Had the examiner been given explicit instructions easily comprehended, in reference to examinations for gas, and the method to be employed for its expulsion when encountered. If the management had done its duty in this respect then, to borrow a sentiment from the Coal Mine Regulation Act, they had taken "reasonable precautions" in respect to gas in working places. A compliance with the demand in the resolution is equal to a summary conviction and swift condemnation of the two officials namde therein. Ah, but it is much more than that. It is a condemnation and conviction of the coroner's jury; of the experts on the Donkin Commission; of the management of the Dominion Coal Coy., and of the Nova Scotia Department of Mines. Three of them may have been guilty of indiscretions that cannot well be atoned for. The sin of the fourth may have been one of omission. But alleged to be guilty one or all, surely, surely in the interest of common decency and common British precedent, each and all of them must be given opportunity, before their reputations are blasted, to prove, or at least attempt to prove, their innocency.

The Dominion Coal Co. cannot afford to comply with the threat in the resolution. If its management believes that the disaster was accidental and the causes that led to it beyond the power of officials to foresee, then it cannot be expected to accept the assertion in the resolution before submission of the proof. If, however, it admits that certain of its officials were guilty of neglect, and steps had been taken for a proper discipline, then the threat loses its point and effect. Should, however, it concede to the request for dismissal, a request based on grounds which up to the time of its making it had not given consideration to, the management leaves itself open, possibly, to a charge of having a mantle of mercy which smothers a correct sense of justice.

Turning to the resolution we read:

"Whereas the Special Commisison appointed by the Government of Nova Scotia found the method of mining adopted by the officials of Dominion No. 12 Mine made impracticable the airing of that mine."