

Hon. Mr. CLORAN—Will the hon. gentleman tell me how long, how wide, and how high the tunnel was?

Hon. Mr. GIRROIR—I am afraid the hon. gentleman will have to go down and measure it.

Hon. Mr. CLORAN—Well, that is supposed to be stated in the report. I want to know.

Hon. Mr. GIRROIR—I have not read the report. Now, if the hon. gentleman will possess his soul in patience for a few minutes, I shall read the opinion of the court as it is most pertinent to this inquiry. The length of the tunnel is given here.

Proceedings of Court of Inquiry—Escape of Prisoners of War, Amherst. Finding.

The court having heard the evidence and having examined the locus is of the mind that twelve prisoners escaped between 6.30 p.m. on the 17th inst., and one on the 18th inst., and that some of the escaped prisoners left on the Maritime Express from Amherst at about 8 p.m. and the remainder by the St. John Express at about 1.30 p.m.

The prisoners made their escape through a tunnel which they dug by breaking off the lock from the sand room door and replacing it with one which they purchased, thus being able to enter the sand room at any time during the day, when on being locked in by their confederates they worked without being disturbed. At night they entered the trap door in the prisoners' lavatory, marked A on the attached plan, and after having worked at the wall between the lavatory and sand room from both sides, made a passageway and were thus able to work at the tunnel both day and night.

The tunnel extended about fifteen yards, coming to the surface just in the rear of the coal shed at a point which the sentries in the vicinity, on a snowy night such as the one of the escape, could not see.

The court is of opinion—

1. That there is no evidence to show that any officer, N.C.O. or man was corrupted or bribed to assist the prisoners in escaping.
2. The constant changing of officers, N.C.O.'s and men of the Internment Camp Staff and the difficulty of adapting the present building with its outbuildings for the purpose of a prison, have been contributory factors in the prisoners' escape.
3. The time between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. is too long without a roll call.
4. That the hole under the trap door in the lavatory should have been regularly inspected.
5. That the sand room and other unoccupied rooms within the camp should have been inspected periodically.
6. That the police supervision at night was not sufficient. It should not have been discontinued between 11 p.m. and reveille.
7. That there has not been sufficiently careful supervision of the purchasing of articles by prisoners outside the canteen sales. Prisoners have been obtaining articles without the careful supervision of an officer.

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8. That there appears to be no proper method of issuing keys and taking receipts for them by the Provost Sergeants or Corporals on being appointed to or relieved of their positions. Under the present system if a key is lost or even given to a prisoner, it would appear to the court to be impossible to definitely fix responsibility for its custody.

9. The instructions to the police escort taking the prisoners to the dentist are too indefinite. They should be in writing.

Signed at Amherst, N.S., this 24th day of January, 1916.

(Signed) A. H. Borden, President,  
Lt.-Col., 85th Bn., C.E.F.

Members: J. L. Ralston,  
Capt. 85th Bn., C.E.F.  
G. G. Anglin,  
Capt. 64th Bn., C.E.F.

That is the report.

Hon. Mr. CLORAN—What does the hon. gentleman think of the findings and conclusions of the court?

Hon. Mr. GIRROIR—I have no opinion to offer as to the conclusions or finding of the court, for the very good reason that I have not had an opportunity of going over the evidence on which these findings are based.

Hon. Mr. McSWEENEY—Was it ascertained at what time in the morning the prisoners escaped?

Hon. Mr. GIRROIR—I do not know. I think about eight o'clock in the morning.

Hon. Mr. McSWEENEY—And I think the first bunch got away at six-thirty the night before.

Hon. Mr. GIRROIR—Yes. I have, however, some remarks to offer upon the statement and charges which the hon. senator made in this House. The court of inquiry made its report after careful investigation, after an examination of the witnesses and sifting the evidence, and their conclusion was that there had been some irregularities—that some things were not done which should have been done, that some things were neglected that should have been attended to, but they did not find that any officer in charge of that camp, or occupying a position in connection with the detention camp, had accepted bribes—

Hon. Mr. CLORAN—There is no question of bribes in the charge.

Hon. Mr. GIRROIR—Yes.

Hon. Mr. CLORAN—No. That was in regard to the Banff camp.