

SENSATIONAL CHARGES

INVESTIGATION TO BE MADE IN-
TO THE DISASTER AT LICK
BRANCH MINE.

The Charleston Mail of January 5th says:

A searching investigation will be demanded of the recent mine explosion at the Lick Branch Mine in McDowell county where fifty men were killed, when the legislative mining committee meets in Charleston on January 14th to complete its report to the state legislature.

MUCH CRITICISM.

Much criticism has been heaped upon the verdict of the coroner's jury at the ill-fated mine, which absolved the company from all blame in connection with the explosion and yet at the same time confessed its ignorance of the causes of the explosion. The failure of the jury to make an attempt to ascertain the cause of the explosion by placing the four deputies and Chief Laing on the stand, after they had made a thorough investigation of the mine, has also been severely criticised.

CALLED 'FARFICAL.'

"Farfical" is the word used by some in referring to the coroner's verdict. The jury was assembled and several witnesses were examined the majority being those who escaped from that portion of the mine which was not affected by the explosion. The fact, however, that the jury did not examine the mine inspectors who were sent to the mine to ascertain the causes of the explosion and then returned a verdict stating they did not know the causes and at the same time absolving the company from any blame in connection with the explosion can hardly be understood by those who are acquainted with the coal industry.

MINE OFFICIAL'S REPORT

The reports of the four deputy mine inspectors, the chief mine inspector and that of Mr. J. W. Paul, ex-chief mine inspector, are anxiously awaited to shed whatever light possible on this recent explosion. These reports will not be made public for several days at least.

CONDITIONS AT LICK BRANCH

It is said that the conditions at the Lick Branch mine will warrant a thorough examination of the mine inspectors and other witnesses by the mining legislative committee. This committee meets in Charleston on January 14th to complete its report to the legislature and it is expected that witnesses will be summoned before the committee to tell what they know of the conditions in that field. Senator T. P. Gartlan of Wood county is chairman of the investigating committee.

WHAT SOME CLAIM.

The mining laws were not observed at the Lick Branch mine, it is said by some who are said to be intimate with the conditions at the mine. The mine was a model mine only for large production and small cost of production, they assert. The excessive use of powder, which is said to be mainly responsible for the explosion, was noticeable at the mine. Shooting off the solid is said to have been practiced while in the mine, vast quantities of powder were found in holes drilled into the coal.

The general condition of the mine and the dangerous practices observed and the causes of the explosion can all be brought out by the mining investigating committee and it is extremely likely that a sweeping investigation will be demanded of that body.