

# TANGLED DEBRIS PREVENTS RESCUERS FROM REACHING BURIED MINERS AT ECCLES

**Latest Figures of West Virginia  
Mine Disaster Place  
Dead at 181.**

**172 BODIES UNDERGROUND  
Repeated Attempts Are Vainly  
Made to Penetrate to  
Wrecked Chambers.**

**HOLMES IS OPTIMISTIC**

**Dependents of Victims Are to  
Be Taken Care of by  
Compensation Law.**

BY FRANK C. KIRKPATRICK.  
Staff Correspondent of The Post.

**ECCLES, W. Va., April 29.**—Lat-  
est figures from the disaster yester-  
day at mines Nos. 5 and 6 of the New  
River Collieries Company place the  
death toll at 181. Sections of the  
mines are still burning; most of the  
172 bodies still underground may be  
found incinerated.

The 172 entombed in mine No. 5  
are all undoubtedly dead; 68 men  
were taken alive out of mine No. 5;  
one has died since being rescued.  
Eight dead were taken out of mine  
No. 6. Of the 67 survivors from  
mine No. 6 two are injured, but not  
fatally.

An attempt is being made now to  
clear the air in mine No. 5 that res-  
cuers may descend. Air is pouring  
through one shaft, but no rescuers  
have attempted to descend the stair-  
way, 240 feet deep, from mine No. 6  
to mine No. 5.

## EXPLOSION OF GAS.

At 9 o'clock tonight a rescuing party  
of six, headed by General Superintendent  
F. P. Bayles, descended into the shaft of  
mine No. 5 in their third attempt to force  
an entrance to the underground re-  
cesses.

Shortly after midnight Chief Mine In-  
spector Earl Henry said girders in the  
shaft of No. 5 mine could not be fixed  
in time to permit a descent to the bottom  
of the shaft until after daylight. Presi-  
dent Frank Guiterman of the company  
hired a special train at Hinton and got  
into Eccles shortly after 5 o'clock this  
morning.

Rescuers never slackened in their ef-  
forts to reach the shaft bottom, although  
the belief, almost to a man, is that the  
miners are dead and buried in masses  
of slate and mine timbers.

## HOLMES HAS HOPE.

The only voice raised in hope is that of  
Director J. A. Holmes of the national  
bureau of mines. He hopes that rescuers  
may find some living if they can make  
any immediate headway in forcing an  
entrance into the mine.

A most determined attempt to get into  
the mine was made early today. Res-  
cuers, headed by Chief Mine Inspector  
Earl Henry, has forced currents of fresh

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**Red Cross Rushes  
Supplies to Eccles**

WASHINGTON, April 29.—Medical and  
surgical supplies were today rushed to  
Eccles, W. Va., by the American Red  
Cross.

Director Charles Jenkinson of the At-  
lantic division has gone to Eccles to as-  
sist the state board in relief work among  
the families of the victims and in caring  
for the injured.





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air down the mine and the cage was bounced up and down in an effort to clear the shaft of obstructions. Seven men were in the party that made the first descent—Chief Inspector Henry, Deputy Inspector L. D. Holliday, Deputy Inspector R. Y. Muir, General Superintendent F. P. Bayle, W. F. Mandt, superintendent of the Sunday Creek mines; T. H. Huddy, general superintendent of the Boomer Coal and Coke Company, and Jesse Hinsley, foreman of the Bluefield rescue car.

The car ran fairly well for a distance of 375 feet, then jammed; all the efforts of the rescue party forced it only 30 feet more. Helpless at a distance of about 125 feet from the bottom of the shaft the rescuers signaled to be hauled back.

Provided with electric flash-lights with long cords attached the rescuers again descended late this afternoon. The cage was stopped by a hard obstruction and all efforts to force it further failed.

The lamps were lowered and by their light it was seen that timbers had become crossed in the shaft. The force of the explosion hurled timbers in the shaft 500 feet from the mouth, tearing seven or eight inch planks to shreds.

### PUMPS ARE WORKING.

With the obstruction charted the rescuing party again ascended and prepared for an attack in the planks and bulged walls. When they went down again tonight they had axes, saws and sledge hammers with them to clear a passage-way for the cage. Late tonight they were still working in the depths of the shaft.

Pumps are working, keeping the mine clear of water; fans are pouring fresh air into the shaft. The nature of the rescue work is such that the volunteers are in little danger. There is always fresh air ahead of them and unless something unforeseen happens no accident will attend the work of reaching the bodies.

Experienced mine officials believe the rescue work will be long and tedious; in their opinion none of the men are living. As Superintendent Bayles expressed it: "There is not a chance in a million." The old miners think the explosion of gas and coal dust tore the timbering and caused big cave-ins. They expect to find the bodies of the dead covered with debris.

In the solemn silence a few sightseers who stayed in the scene late saw the last of the eight dead hauled away from the makeshift morgue to little country cemeteries. One body was buried yesterday afternoon and the other seven were buried by twilight tonight.

It is the general opinion now that the disaster was caused by an explosion of gas in mine No. 5, followed by an explosion of coal dust. There is not a chance in a million that any person in mine No. 5 is alive. The explosion proper did not penetrate to mine No. 6. The men killed there ran to the shaft mouth and were overcome and suffocated by afterward. Those who kept away from the shaft mouth until the rescuers pumped fresh air into the mine were brought out practically unhurt.

### PITTSBURGHERS AT WORK.

The mine rescue car in charge of J. W. Paul of Pittsburgh arrived in Eccles at 1 o'clock this afternoon.

Mine cars, pit posts and other equipment choking the shaft of No. 6 mine bars the progress of the rescuing parties who have battled all night to gain entrance to the working of No. 5.

The workers are still feverishly tearing away at the debris which formed a barrier to the tomb. The heat is intense. Fans wrecked or crippled by the explosion have been patched up and are now in operation.

Governor Hatfield, with state mine inspectors and rescue crews from various depots of the Federal bureau of mines,

is on the scene directing the work. Miners from other mines in the district rushed to the stricken town and offered their assistance.

Rescuers descending in a cage in the shaft of No. 5 were halted 400 feet below the surface and within 125 feet of the base of the shaft. The shaft was damaged and was filled with debris blown out by the explosion.

### MANY TOUCHING SCENES.

Residents of Eccles and surrounding country spent a sleepless night as a result of the explosion. The entire population of 4,000 men, women and children congregated about the wrecked shafts of mines No. 5 and 6, the men offering their assistance and the women and children weeping. There were many touching scenes as wives, mothers, sisters, brothers and fathers waited about the shafts for some tidings of loved ones who were below the ground.

Eccles is a model mining town, the center of the largest mining operations in Southern West Virginia. There are eight shaft mines here employing from 1,200 to 1,500 men. All of the mines are owned by the New River Colliers Company.

Hundreds of miners from all sections of the New River and Kanawha fields have volunteered their services for rescue work, willing to risk their own lives in an attempt to save others. This morning's trains brought at least 200 volunteers to the scene of the explosion.

Operators at other mines have tendered their services, and many of them are here assisting in the work. Today's trains brought large crowds of sightseers and persons inquiring of relatives believed to have been employed here. Telegraphic communication with the mining camp was established this afternoon and immediately dozens of messages poured in to inquire of the possible fate of some relative.

According to a statement made by General Manager S. A. Scott of the New River Colliers Company, the explosion was due to an accumulation of coal dust. Scott stated the mine was inspected April 12 and said coal dust had been found throughout. He was ordered to sprinkle the mine and did so.

### DEPENDENTS CARED FOR.

Unlike the other disastrous mine explosions in this state, the widows, children and other dependents will be taken care of by a fund created by the employers and employees, made possible when the Legislature enacted the workmen's compensation act, which became effective October 1, 1913. At the present time this fund has about \$325,000, part of which has been invested. Persons connected with the workmen's compensation fund estimated the Eccles mine disaster has caused an obligation of not less than \$500,000. A comparatively small amount will be needed immediately.

The law provides that in the case of the death of an employee the widow shall receive \$20 a month as long as she lives and does not remarry, and \$5 a month for each child under the age of 15 years and until such child reaches the age of 15 years, with a maximum of \$35 a month to any widow and her children. By remarriage the widow not only cuts herself off but also cuts off any compensation that might thereafter be due any of her children under the age of 15 years.

### AT LEAST 100 WIDOWS.

An examination of the list of names of those taken from the Eccles mine and those entombed shows that there will be not less than 100 widows, and at least 200 children under the age of 15 years who will become dependents under the workmen's compensation fund. Fathers and mothers are also dependents under certain conditions—where a single son under the age of 21 years contributed to the support of his parents, and in the case of invalid dependents over the age of 15.

The state is able to take care immediately of all expenses due to burials and those left dependents to the amount provided by law.

This law was not in effect when the other great mine disasters occurred, and as a result a large number of families in each instance were left without means of support except what was contributed through charity. The workmen's compen-

sation fund will prove a God-send to these widows and orphans at Eccles, and every effort will be made to pay the claims as quickly as each case can be put into shape.

### NO SUBSCRIPTIONS.

"There will be no public subscriptions for sufferers from this disaster," said Governor Hatfield, who was at the mine mouth all day. "The compensation of dependents of dead miners by the state makes subscriptions unnecessary."

Early yesterday the corps started with a list of the dead and missing in a search for dependents of the miners. A stenographer took testimony about the extent of support given by the dead or missing miner to his dependents; the testimony was given under affidavit of friends or relatives; and all that remains to be done to proffer relief is the furnishing of proof of death. From house to house went the enumerators, taking affidavits from widows who apathetically signed them. That will keep them from want.

The sufferers from the disaster were the quietest persons in the mining settlement. Interpreters accompanied the investigators, for Eccles is a cosmopolitan village. Of the 172 men entombed in mine No. 5 only 50 are white Americans and about 40 are negroes. There are about 25 Italians numbered among the men entombed and the others are of 10 or 12 nationalities.

## Rescue Car Arrival Gives Birth to Hope

ECCLES, W. Va., April 29.—By a curious process of reasoning, born of desire, the arrival of the mine rescue car from Pittsburgh yesterday afternoon caused the birth of new hopes that some of the 172 men in mine No. 5 might be saved.

It was recalled that all of the miners in Cherry mines were given up for dead when the Pittsburghers, headed by James W. Paul, broke through brattices and saved some who survived an eight-day imprisonment underground. Paul is again at the head of the Pittsburgh mine rescuers and he is known and admired by thousands of the West Virginia miners. He was at the head of the West Virginia department of mines until he entered the United States service. The trip of Pittsburghers was a tedious one and they did not arrive in Eccles until after 1 o'clock. Accompanying Paul are G. H. Dieke and J. T. Ryan, assistant mining engineers, and H. D. Jones, W. A. Randenbush and Henry Fieldworth, rescue foreman. Paul consulted with the leaders in the rescue work and helped to plan the campaign now being carried out for the recovery of the bodies in mine No. 5.

But like his companions and experienced miners, Paul has little hope that anyone will be taken out of the mine alive.

## Relatives Watching In Solemn Silence

ECCLES, W. Va., April 29.—Unlike other mine disasters the Eccles explosion has left the little settlement too dazed to break forth in a panic of grief. A rush of shrieking women to the mine mouths yesterday was followed today by solemn silence. Fifteen hundred relatives and friends of the entombed miners and sightseers from nearby towns, sat voiceless on the hillside about the mine mouth. The two trains coming into Eccles today were crowded with sightseers. They moved about the straggling village restlessly, but when they merged with the silent, waiting crowd on the amphitheater-like hills surrounding the mine mouth, they, too, became silent.

Hastily constructed barricades of inch lumber kept crowds from hampering the work of rescuers. Women who had lost their husbands and sons were seen in the crowd infrequently. They kept to their homes and waited for friends to bring them news. But there were many women in the sightseeing crowds. They were dressed as for a picnic in light summery colors.