

# HOPE FOR ANY LIVES GIVEN UP

## Men in Oklahoma Buried in 600 Foot Shaft After Dust Explosion—Troops on Guard

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla., Jan. 13.—State mine inspector Ed Boyle of Oklahoma Bureau of Mines, in a long distance telephone conversation from Wilburton, with his assistant in the bureau's office here this afternoon, stated that 105 miners, entombed following an explosion at the Degnan-McConnell mine No. 21 early this morning, were all dead.

Boyle declared, according to his assistant, that he had been informed that one of the fire bosses in the mine was an inexperienced man and held no certificate as provided by state law.

Another fire boss at the mine had been intoxicated for some time, Boyle was quoted as having been informed.

McALESTER, Okla., Jan. 13.—Hope that any of the 105 miners buried in a shaft 600 feet deep by an explosion early today at Wilburton, near here, was virtually abandoned this afternoon when rescue parties returned with word that no trace of them had been found.

Significance was seen in the act of the Degnan-McConnell Coal company who ordered 75 coffins from a casket company at Ft. Smith, Ark.

An improvised hospital was being made ready near the shaft, resuscitating apparatus was being installed and nurses from nearby towns were being mobilized in case any of the men were alive when they were taken out eventually.

1926 Wilburton No 21 Mine explosion  
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State Mine Inspector Ed. Boyle stated the disaster was the worst in the history of the state. An explosion at McCurtain in 1911 which cost 74 lives was recalled by the officials.

Meanwhile additional sheriff's forces were being mustered to keep back the surging crowd of hysterical women—wives, sweethearts and relatives of the entombed miners.

The miners were entombed when an explosion at 8:10 o'clock this morning tossed timbers and debris high into the air from the shaft of mine No. 21 of the Degnan-McConnell Coal company at Wilburton, near here.

Shortly after noon, two crews had entered the shaft through two temporary entrances. They reported they had not been able to reach or see any of the entombed men.

Officials at that hour were able to say only that if back damp does not accumulate in the lateral passageways they had hope of rescuing some of the men alive.

Troops from Muskogee, Okla., sheriffs, deputies and volunteers were attempting to keep order among the frantic wives and relatives who thronged the mine mouth by the hundreds.

Tensity was added to the situation because of feeling between peace officers and the military in the district, made famous last year by the "praying miners" meetings where union miners protested a lockout of prayer-meetings near the mines, directly against the orders of Governor Trapp against picketing.

Troops were in the district for months. There are several minor clashes and the bitterness is still unallayed. The miners carried their case to the state high courts, were sustained and the governor severely rebuked in an opinion of the court of criminal appeals.

The mine is an open shop and in the heart of the territory where a lockout has prevailed for two years.

Recently there have been rumblings of discontent because trouble

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over the wage scale which resulted in the lockout had not been adjusted and because many mines had reopened with the 1917 scale in effect and state authorities have been prepared at short notice to order national guardsmen, who have been called out before, to return to the district.

The trouble reached a climax some months ago at Henrietta when miners, forbidden by executive proclamation to picket the working mines, held prayer-meetings near the shafts in the hopes of winning over the men who had gone to work.

Hysterical women—wives, sweethearts and relatives—swarmed the entrance to the mine at noon while rescue parties from McAlester worked feverishly to save the lives of the 105 coal miners entombed.

The explosion, mine officials declared, occurred 45 minutes after the force entered the mine. The cause, it was added, was probably from an accumulation of gas in the shaft.

The mine, 600 feet deep, entered through a diagonal "air hole" at 10:20 by members of the rescue party who declared it was problematical if all lives could be saved.

The tippie, elevator shaft and entrance to the mine was closed by falling timbers and debris.

Sheriff's forces of Latimer county were on hand, keeping the frantic wives, sweethearts and relatives of the entombed miners away from rescue operations.

It will not be learned, mine officials declared, until this afternoon some time whether any of the 105 men can be rescued.

If black damp does not accumulate in the lateral passageways there is hope of saving the crew, they added, and fans, gas masks and other paraphernalia are being rushed from McAllester to the scene.

In addition to the rescue force from McAlester bureau of mine rescue stations, a large force of men was recruited by mine officials to repair inestimable damage to the tippie, elevator and timbered supports at the entrance to the mine.