

# START PROBE OF MINE EXPLOSION TESTIMONY

Completed Report of Ohio's Worst Mine Disaster in Recent Years to Be Given to Governor Bricker — Report will Include Cause of Blast and Recommendations to Prevent Explosion in Future.

COLUMBUS, O., April 4 (UP) — Officials of the State Department of Industrial Relations started today to sift testimony taken in the investigation of the Willow Grove mine explosion and prepare a report on Ohio's worst mine catastrophe in recent years for Governor John W. Bricker.

The investigation, conducted by George A. Strain, director of industrial relations, will seek to fix the cause of the explosion that took 72 lives March 16 and make recommendations to prevent accidents.

A dozen Ohio mine inspectors and a number of officials of the Hanna Coal Co., operators of the Willow Grove mine, testified at the hearings that were concluded here yesterday after preliminary inquiries were made at the scene of the explosion.

There was a difference of opinion as to the cause of the primary explosion. Most of the men expressed the belief that a powder box exploded first and then set off further explosions of coal dust.

A number of the mine inspectors, however, were of the opinion that an accident during normal mining operations set off the coal dust and that the powder box explosion was secondary.

Several inspectors expressed the opinion that an over-charge of blasting powder sent a flame shooting into a room and that the flame exploded the coal dust.

R. L. Ireland Jr., of Cleveland, president of the coal company, testified that he was convinced from his own examination of the explosion that the blast originated in a powder box and that it did not result from a routine blast of powder.

"It is difficult to give a logical reason why it should have occurred in the powder box but by a process of elimination that seems the most likely place," Ireland said.

He said that the instrument that touched off the powder might have been a lighted match, a cigaret, a torn piece of blasting paper, a fall of coal that struck a match or some similar mishap.

Ireland said that the force of the explosion would have been curtailed considerably if the mine had been treated by the process known as rock dusting. This is the spraying of the floor, walls and roofs of workings with rock dust to neu-

## GALE BLOWS CHURCH FROM FOUNDATION

GADIZ, O., April 4 (UP) — A gale that struck the village of Tappan into yesterday blew a church from its foundation and upset it, damaged seven barns, two covered bridges and other buildings. The damage was estimated at \$30,000.

Rain and hail accompanied the storm. The church had just been moved as part of the Muskingum conservancy district relocation project.

A state highway department crew under Lorin Boyd, of Dover, helped farmers rescue stock from the wrecked barns.

## INQUEST BEING HELD IN DEATH OF ADVENTURER

ZEBALLOS, B. O., April 4 (UP)

An inquest was scheduled today in a little cabin on Vernon lake where James Ryckman, 56, starved to death, and Lloyd Coombs, 27, near the same death, shot himself.

After the inquest, their bodies will be flown here for burial.

They left a diary that told of the agony of slow starvation and the torrential rains that prevented them from hunting and fishing for food after their supplies were gone. It began Nov. 25; ended March 17, the day Ryckman died and Coombs committed suicide.

Besides the diary, they left an epitaph scrawled in fungus on the door of the cabin.

NEW PHILADELPHIA, O. (UP)

French Bahmer, 50, was killed late yesterday when his gun discharged accidentally while he was getting over a fence near here. He was going crow hunting.

tralize the explosive potentialities of coal dust.

"Hind sight has shown us that more rock dusting would have been advisable," he said.

He revealed that the company had ordered a new rock dusting machine but that it had not been delivered when the explosion occurred.

Richard McGee, mine inspector in the Belmont county district, testified that he had recommended more extensive rock dusting in the mine and that he had conferred with mine officials on the purchase of a machine a short time before the explosion.

McGee told of the rescue work at the mine and explained that the lives of 68 miners were saved because he insisted that the stricken area be shut off from the ventilating circuit so that carbon monoxide fumes would not be forced into the sections where men were still working.