

NEW YORKER ASKS PROBE

HAWK'S NEST MAN SAYS BODIES NOT DUMPED IN FIELD

Silicosis Cases Brought To Front By Charge Of Congressman

Summersville, W. Va., Jan. 15.—An undertaker pointed to thirty-three graves marked by wooden slabs on the side of a bleak hill yesterday and vigorously denied the declaration of a congressman that some who died at Hawk's Nest during the construction of a \$10,000,000 hydro-electric plant were "dumped" into a cornfield.

H. C. White, the undertaker, asserted the death certificates all showed causes other than silicosis a lung disease which Representative Vito Marcantonio, of New York, said killed 476 of the workers in a tunnel drilled as part of the plant.

White stood in the little graveyard on his father's farm and pointed toward the nearest cornfield, a few hundred feet away but out of sight over the crest of the hill.

"There was no other place to bury them," he said.

"Rinehart & Dennis, the contractors who dug the tunnel, paid me for the funerals, and the cost covered burial clothes as well as graves.

"Some of the bodies were kept for a long time. Nobody knew who their survivors were. No one ever claimed a single one of the bodies."

He declared that of the thirty-three graves, three were those of women.

"One of the women was killed in a fight with knives, another one was killed when a tree fell on her shack. I don't recall how the other one died.

"But none of the death certificates gives silicosis as the cause. Pneumonia is the reason given on most certificates."

In Washington, the House of Representatives projected an investigation of working conditions in the tunnel, Marcantonio having asked that a board of inquiry be created. The New Yorker asserted 1,500 men are suffering from silicosis—caused by inhaling powdered silica sand—and that 169 bodies were "dumped" into a cornfield and their only gravestones are cornstalks waving in the wind.

In Charleston yesterday, George S. Couch, an attorney declared that "nobody on earth will ever know how many persons contracted silicosis" from the silica sand in the tube.

Couch represented Rinehart & Dennis, Charlottesville, Va., contractors, who were sued by hundreds of persons claiming to have contracted the lung disease from breathing particles of silica sand.

He asserted that after the contractors paid a number of men who proved they suffered the effects, "everybody in Southern West Virginia seemed to have silicosis.

"I have handled about 450 suits since the first case was filed. Since then, between 4,000 and 5,000 persons have tried to sue the contractors, claiming they had contracted the disease."