

# FIRE ESCAPE POOR, SAYS AHEARN'S AID

**Binghamton Clothing Factory,  
According to Deputy Marshal,  
Was Equipped Poorly.**

## HE WARNS OTHER PLANTS

**Plot Alleged to Fix Blame on Labor  
Commission — Number of  
Known Dead Forty.**

*Special to The New York Times.*

BINGHAMTON, July 24.—As the result of many hours' work in the ruins of the Binghamton Clothing Company's factory, twenty-nine bodies have been taken from the wreckage, of which only six have been identified. The list of known dead has been reduced to forty by the discovery that Miss Catherine Sullivan, who was counted among the missing, was on a vacation in Canada.

George F. Roesch of Albany, Deputy State Fire Marshal, asserted to-day he had obtained evidence that the fire escape on the clothing factory was faulty and did not comply with the State labor law. He said it was constructed of light iron piping, that the sideholds were two pieces of five-eighths iron, which also was used for steps; that the platforms were undersized, and that such a fire escape was dangerous. He announced that he just had served notice on the owners of three amusement places, two mercantile blocks, and a factory that better facilities must be provided in twenty-four hours or the State would close their doors.

Bernard Shientag, assistant counsel to the Senate Investigating Committee, said it would hold a public investigation later in the week, but would take no action now which might hamper the District Attorney. He added the committee would endeavor to remedy conditions that had made possible such a disaster, and if that required an amendment or abrogation of the labor laws the changes would be made at the present special session of the Legislature.

Speaking of Gov. Sulzer's charges as to Tammany Leader Murphy's responsibility, he asserted the Senate was ready to act on the appointment of any capable man as Labor Commissioner, but refused to confirm an incompetent. The Senate, he said, stood ready to change the entire Labor Commission.

The attitude taken by the Deputy Fire Marshal and the attorney for the Senate committee aroused friends of the Labor Commission. Those friends charged that a political plot was under way to fasten the factory tragedy on the Labor Commission or one or more of its employes, in the hope of creating a public sentiment toward radical action at the expense of the Labor Commission.

William C. Rogers, Acting Commissioner of Labor, was in the city in consultation with his deputies. He announced he would outline no plan of procedure until he returned to Albany to-night and consulted with ex-Labor Commissioner Williams.

Binghamton has raised a fund of almost \$10,000 to care for the families of the dead. Plans are being made for a public funeral of the victims on Sunday afternoon. A plot has been offered in Spring Forest Cemetery. The conference of ministers of all denominations held to choose a burial place left the selection to Mayor Irving.

The body of John E. Schemerhorn, the missing engineer, was found in the basement to-day. It was identified by Masonic emblems and five \$10 bills, to recover which he returned to the building and lost his life.

The body of Sidney Dimmock, who died when trying to save a group of girls on his floor after taking several to safety, was found in a corner of the building in a standing attitude.

Coroner Seymour began this morning an inquest into the cause of the fire. District Attorney Meagher conducted the examinations. His questioning of witnesses made evident the trend of theory that the fire was caused by a cigarette thrown by a careless employe, probably from the second floor through an opening beside the rear stairway, the cigarette igniting a pile of plush of a highly inflammable nature. The Coroner ruled that the inquest should be restricted to a purely independent investigation to avoid confusion. Deputy State Fire Marshal Roesch objected, as it would prevent his department participating in the inquest.

Ambrose Fuller, a shipping clerk, described at length the plan of the building and his discovery of the fire. He denied that chemicals or gasoline had been stored near the spot where the fire originated.

Alfred Decker, who rang the alarm through the factory, was the next witness. Then Johanna Casey was called. She said that instead of the gong ringing the signal for the girls for each stage of the fire drill, as required and as had been practiced, the gong sounded continuously, which confused the employes. All who escaped with her got out in three minutes. The fire escapes had not been used in the fire drills.

Mrs. Ada M. Tilmann told of discovering the fire on the fourth floor before the fire gong rang. She described the slow movements of the girls, some of whom had not left their machines when she was descending the stairs.

## DEMANDS INCLOSED STAIRS.

**Committee on Safety Wires to Governor About Factory Fire.**

Miss Frances Perkins, Executive Secretary of the Committee on Safety, sent a dispatch to Gov. Sulzer yesterday in which she said the Binghamton fire called attention to the exemption of four-story buildings from the Factory Law clause providing inclosed stairways in fireproof partitions. Her dispatch continued:

Loss of life at Binghamton could have been largely prevented if stairway had been so safeguarded. The exemption is proved unsafe. Will you send a special message to the Legislature asking that they amend the labor law so as to correct that error while there is still time? The Committee on Safety asks this as a means of preventing another fire disaster in New York State.

A special report of the committee on

the factory disaster said it was not safe to let down the requirements of the law in favor even of good factories. It reasoned there had been little likelihood of a blaze in the Binghamton Clothing Company's plant, but that when a fire did occur, the lack of adequate exits was just as dangerous as it would have been in the case of a poorly conducted factory. The report added that any of the following three things, if they had been present in the Binghamton building, would have prevented loss of life:

1. (And most important)—If there had been one continuous stairway extending in a straight line from the fourth floor to the ground floor, inclosed in a fireproof partition, there would have been ample means for escape for all the 111 persons in the building.
2. If there had been a fire wall anywhere in the building all of the persons in the building would have been saved.
3. If there had been fire-escapes on the north side of the building as well as on the rear, there would probably have been more chance for the occupants to escape. As it was, the draft took the fire straight out of the windows leading on to the one fire-escape and cut the people off from safety.

The Committee on Safety demanded that the Legislature correct the error it made in exempting four-story factories from the inclosed stairway requirement. It said:

## FEAR SPIRAL TUBE ESCAPES.

**Government's Warehouse Is Oddly Equipped—Appraiser Orders Drills.**

With a view to preventing a disaster similar to the Binghamton factory fire Frederick A. Higgins, Appraiser of the Port, yesterday issued an order providing for fire drills in the Appraiser's warehouse, at Washington and Christopher Streets. The Government's warehouse is ten stories high, and covers a city block. It houses more than 1,000 employes, while visitors to the building during business hours add several hundred persons to the regular population.

The Appraiser's order directs that at the sounding of an alarm all employes and other persons throughout the structure are to leave the building at once. Both the passenger and freight elevators will be utilized, as well as the fire escapes if the occupants of the building can be persuaded to use them.

Several years ago, after a controversy with the New York City Fire Department the Government refused to place outside escapes on the building, but installed a system of cylindrical metal tubes in the interior of the structure.

The tubes are arranged in spiral form, each floor having an entrance. The method of reaching the street is to slip into the tube and toboggan down to the exits on Greenwich Street. Women clerks refuse absolutely to use the slides under any circumstances. The only men who have made the descent were members of the cleaners' force, acting under orders from the Superintendent. The last descent was made by a negro cleaner, who, it is said, emerged with skin of an ashen color.