

of the fire. Counsel appointed by the Crown to assist the Commission, Mr. G. G. G. Watson, has assured us that he has been through all these statements, and that all witnesses were called who could give evidence regarding the inception of the fire, its course, measures taken for its control, and the steps taken to save the lives of those in the buildings, whether as principals, employees, or workmen.

6. In addition to these, the Crown has called experts on matters relating to the construction and general layout of the buildings; the materials used for lining internal walls and for partitions; the installation and functioning of the electric-power supply to the premises; the possibility of the formation and accumulation of combustible gases at or near the seat of the fire; and, generally, on such other matters as might be held to be contributing causes to the rapid spread of the fire throughout the buildings.

7. By advertisement in the press we invited evidence from any person who considered he or she could give evidence of assistance to us, and a number of public-spirited citizens came forward and gave evidence. Counsel for the Crown, by advertisement in the daily press on 10th January, also requested persons having any information that might assist the Commission to communicate with counsel, but no person not already interviewed by the police came forward.

8. In addition to formal evidence and exhibits, our attention has been called to various municipal and Fire Board statutory provisions, regulations, and by-laws, and compliance or non-compliance with them has been considered. We have also been referred to various New Zealand and overseas publications regarding fire-fighting and fire grading of buildings, and relevant material in these publications has been discussed and considered.

9. The following counsel appeared to represent interests concerned:—

Mr. G. G. G. Watson, and with him Mr. R. A. Young, appointed by the Crown to assist the Commission.

Mr. T. P. Cleary, and with him Mr. T. A. Gresson, for Messrs. J. Ballantyne and Co., Ltd.

Mr. C. S. Thomas for the accident underwriters.

Mr. E. D. Blundell, and with him Mr. R. Twynham, for the fire underwriters.

Mr. B. A. Barrer, and with him Mr. A. C. Perry, and, on retirement of Mr. Perry through illness, Mr. A. C. Fraser, for the Clothing-trades' Union, the Retail-Shop Assistants' Union, and the Clerks' and Cashiers' Union.

Mr. W. R. Lascelles, and with him Mr. E. A. Lee, for the Christchurch City Council.

Mr. J. D. Hutchison, and with him Mr. C. G. Penlington, for the Christchurch Fire Board.

Mr. A. C. Fraser for Mrs. Patricia Lovell (widow of fire victim).

Mr. E. S. Bowie for the contractors (Thompson and Dorreen, Ltd.) who installed the electric cable in 1936.

Mr. C. V. Lester for Mr. K. O. Smith (a witness).

Mr. P. P. J. Amodeo for Mrs. I. M. Lough (widow of fire victim).

Mr. W. H. Mathison for the Christchurch Fire Brigades' Employees, Union.

Mr. L. Glover for the Fire Superintendents' and Deputy Superintendents' Union.

10. To assist us to follow the course of the fire, as outlined by the various witnesses, and to enable witnesses to point out their own and the movements of others in and about the building during the fire, the Public Works Department Architect prepared a model of the Ballantyne buildings to a scale of one-eighth of one inch to one foot. This model was of very great assistance to us during the hearing of evidence and the compiling of our report.