

'L SACRIFICE NO MORE NEED TO JUSTIFY'—CRITICISM OF SYSTEM CANNOT TRIM'—CRITICISM

Birmingham's gas system, for the most part, "is an old, antiquated system," is one of the few Michigan cities having a dual pressure system, and many are hurried too close to the ground, Birmingham Fire Chief Vern W. Griffith charged yesterday in a three-page report handed City Manager Donald C. Egbert.

Griffith declared that Consumers Power Co. should be required to:

- 1) Give most of their Birmingham mains a major overhauling;
- 2) Bury mains and service lines below the established Michigan frost line;
- 3) Install house service lines in a safer manner; and
- 4) Maintain a repair service of which both the company and its customers can be proud.

Griffith also recommended to Egbert that the city of Birmingham provide enough inspectors to determine that

every inch of gas distribution system outside of any home or building in the city is properly and safely installed.

The fire chief emphasized, "I am not going to sacrifice any more men in an attempt to justify such a system as now exists.

"We cannot trust that this system any longer as one we can trust."

Griffith's full report to Egbert follows:

"Many people since this fire have asked me why our city, as small as it is, should have our people and those who are responsible for the safety of our people, killed, maimed and rendered unconscious by so many gas accidents.

"Up to this point I have, with the other city officials, been patient with the Consumers Power Company, believing that their service generally would be improved, and that, upon their own initiative, they would eliminate these danger

spots—and they know them well; any rigid cast iron conductor is not safe for transmission of this type of gas.

"The hazards of the distribution of this gas have increased more than 100 percent for with the old "water gas" there was but 500 B.T.U. per cu. ft., whereas the new natural gas which has recently been brought to and distributed in this area carries 1000 B.T.U. per cu. ft. and has a lower flash range, requiring less than half the natural gas to have the same potency and explosive force than the old water gas.

"Our city, small as it is, has suffered more casualties and injuries, I believe, than has Pontiac and Detroit combined over a period of years.

"I will list the five defects of this distribution system, for I now believe that nothing but public sentiment can force the issue and cause the action that is necessary in a short period of time to correct the system.

"1. The gas system in the city of Birmingham for the most part, excepting in the new subdivisions, is an old, antiquated system which has been patched up and maintained without doing a complete re-building job. Some of these patches and conductors we know, and we have found them rusted and eaten through to a point where nothing but a hole in the ground under a street conducts this gas.

"2. This is one of the few cities, if not the only one, which has a dual pressure distribution system. By that I mean that part of the system carries from 10 to 15 pounds of pressure; this is called the low pressure. The other, or high pressure system, carries from 40 to 60 pounds pressure, and too many homes in the city of Birmingham have this high pressure piped into their basements in rusty old iron pipes which ought to have been replaced years ago.

"The only purpose for this dual system in Birmingham (See GRIFFITH'S REPORT, Page 2)

"Greater love hath no man than that he lay down his life for his friends." That is what Birmingham fireman Lee C. Carroll did Sunday night in the performance of his duty. Each of us should always remember his sacrifice.

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Only a Few Moments After Sunday's Gas Explosion

THIS and THAT
By G. R. A.

Taxpayer Swallowed in Belly of Bureaucratic Whale

Most people have always complained about taxes. In part, they feel that funds collected from individuals by a unit of government are spent, in part, extravagantly and inefficiently.

No honest public official, beset with public demands that government more and more assume responsibility for what the individual ought to do, must have additional taxes to execute this responsibility.

In basic substance, then, the increased cost of contemporary government majority can be laid at the very doors of the people—the taxpayers—themselves!

Of course, some public officials, for political purposes, clamor for more things to do. They delude the taxpayers into believing that government can do them at less expense—certainly their play upon the willingness of human beings to let George do it! pays off.

The result is that government gets bigger and bigger and with it taxes rise higher and higher.

Five Basic Duties

Essentially, though, government exists to perform a comparatively few of the manifold things men do. Providing for the common defense, promoting the education, enlightening the farmer, protecting our natural resources... these are the elemental duties of government.

But officialdom has gone far beyond that. The political spell-binder argues that the State should look after human beings with the protective influence of motherhood and fatherhood. That is nothing but an argument for "welfare, statism", and, finally, totalitarianism.

Jefferson Warned

Thomas Jefferson, one of the great practical liberals of our country, recognized the danger of too much paternalism in government. In his message to Congress on Dec. 8, 1801, he said:

"When we consider that this Government is charged with the external and mutual relations only of these States; that the States themselves have the principal care of our persons, our property and our reputation, constituting the great field of human concern, we may well doubt whether our organization is not too complicated, too expensive, whether officers and officers have not been multiplied unnecessarily and sometimes injuriously to the service they were meant to promote."

That was said by a President of the United States in 1801. We're offering alive today, to the method of the Truman administration, what would he say or do?

It might be would be leading (See THIS & THAT, Page 4)

WANNA SELL A TRAIN?

Then try an Eccentric For Sale Miscellaneous list this lady did—she got 15 cents.

FOR SALE MISCELLANEOUS—Real estate, furniture, auto, house, electric train, consisting of 1 engine, 10 cars, 100 feet of track, 100 feet of wire, 100 feet of cable, 100 feet of rope, 100 feet of string, 100 feet of twine, 100 feet of thread, 100 feet of yarn, 100 feet of fabric, 100 feet of paper, 100 feet of cloth, 100 feet of leather, 100 feet of metal, 100 feet of wood, 100 feet of stone, 100 feet of brick, 100 feet of tile, 100 feet of glass, 100 feet of plastic, 100 feet of rubber, 100 feet of wax, 100 feet of oil, 100 feet of paint, 100 feet of varnish, 100 feet of glue, 100 feet of cement, 100 feet of mortar, 100 feet of concrete, 100 feet of plaster, 100 feet of stucco, 100 feet of brickwork, 100 feet of masonry, 100 feet of carpentry, 100 feet of plumbing, 100 feet of electrical, 100 feet of mechanical, 100 feet of plumbing, 100 feet of electrical, 100 feet of mechanical, 100 feet of plumbing, 100 feet of electrical, 100 feet of mechanical.

PHONE 11 AND 436 FOR THE CLASSIFIED DESK
Deadline for Insertion Tuesday—5 P.M.

This picture of the disastrous Sunday evening explosion and fire at the Mother and Son Antique Shop on N. Woodward was taken by Joe Wheeler, Birmingham, Eccentric photographer, only minutes after the accident occurred.

Sidelights on the Explosion

While the city hall flag flew at half-mast Monday, honoring Fireman Lee Carroll, one of five to die in a gas explosion Sunday night, weird stories of the blast circulated through the city.

Some were false, some were true. Some were filled with pathos, others brought chuckles in spite of the horror which created them.

Not in the remembered history of Birmingham has such a holocaust visited this community. An estimated ten thousand human beings were gathered in the vicinity of Sunday night's destruction of the Jones' Mother & Son Antique Shop; upon their faces was written something of the emotions that stirred them, as they watched the hungry flames consume the structure that contained five, as yet unaccounted for, fellow human beings.

Among the first acts of Nelson Jones, son and brother of the owners of the wrecked antique shop, had to do when he arrived from Cleveland was to destroy his mother's pigcat Mike.

Mike was unthought of during the fire, and it wasn't until he appeared at the Reincke home Monday that anyone remembered him. Mrs. Reincke found Mike sitting in what remained of a cellar window, unmoving and dazed from shock. What Jones arrived and spoke to the animal, Mike showed that he remembered his voice, but refused to come. Finally cornered in the basement, it was found that his feet were so badly burned that the only kind thing was to have him killed.

A Chinese Buddha and a small octagon table seemed

Wheeler, who lives only a block from the scene, got there as firemen arrive. The extension ladder on the fire truck (left) was just about to be hoisted, and a flying ember caught in it (just above the ladder) is still freshly burning.

Lee C. Carroll Fund

By George R. Averill

Lee C. Carroll, Birmingham fireman, gave his life in the performance of duty Sunday night when a gas explosion in the Mother & Son Antique Shop also claimed the lives of four other people.

The full story of Lee's devotion and sacrifice is contained in this issue of The Eccentric.

In a very literal sense, this brave man, the first ever to lose his life as a member of the Birmingham Fire Department, gave his life in defense of every citizen in this community!

It could have been the house of any one who lives in Birmingham that Lee would have responded to; instead, it was the Antique Shop.

Without fear for his own personal safety, when the call came in Sunday night to investigate a suspected gas leak, he responded within minutes.

He Did Not Hesitate

He did not know exactly, nor did he hesitate to find out, the amount of danger and hazard that might be his upon entrance to the property he was investigating.

He did his preliminary job of investigation and immediately set in motion, by telephoning the Fire Dept., the human means of bringing the situation under control.

Within seconds from the conclusion of his call to fire headquarters, the explosion occurred. Though he lost his life, he dedicated his last earthly moments to the job he had the job of protecting and saving human life and property!

The name of Lee C. Carroll shall always be remembered in Birmingham's official and civilian circles.

He symbolized, in heroic manner, the whole devotion of the men who risk life and limb, friends and family, to the protection of the public.

Lee C. Carroll no longer is with us, but his widow and small daughter survive. They, too, have paid the supreme sacrifice in their loss of husband and father.

Birmingham's firemen, too, have lost a valuable and true

MPSC Investigation of City Gas Mains Sought as Result of Explosion

Mrs. Wilson's Condition Still Is 'Critical'

5 Dead, 4 Injured in City's Worst Catastrophe

Three men and two women were burned to death and four people injured, in Birmingham's worst fire Sunday night, when a gas explosion occurred at the Mother & Son Antique Shop, 720 N. Woodward Avenue.

The Antique Shop, a rambling frame building, was blown to bits, its contents strewn over the area for a distance of several blocks. Concussion from the explosion was felt within a radius of two miles, while in the immediate vicinity store and residence windows were shattered.

Those who met their death in the holocaust were Mrs. Charles E. Jones, 76, her son, Wilson, 47, proprietors; Arthur Wilson, 59, of 22226 Alexandria, Dearborn; Mrs. Roy T. Bramson, Lone Pine Road, Bloomfield Hills; and Lee C. Carroll, 45, a member of the Birmingham Fire Dept., and its first fatality in the history of the department.

Birmingham police officers Martin Holmquist and L.A. Mrs. Gilchrist, and William Morrison, Jr., 1220 1/2 Blvd., were cut and bruised by flying glass and debris which showered Woodward avenue. They were treated at St. Joseph's and released.

David L. Brown, of Pontiac, Division Manager of Consumers Power Company, stated today that the Consumers Power Company has investigated the explosion and fire which occurred on Sunday, December 11th, at 720 North Woodward Avenue, Birmingham, Michigan.

"Our records indicate that the company received a call at 6:45 p.m. A gas service man arrived at the scene of the explosion 13 minutes later. A second service man, called by the Birmingham Fire Department, also arrived immediately after the first man. Had the call been received sooner, it is entirely possible that our men would have arrived in time to save all personnel from the building as all servicemen have been thoroughly instructed in this procedure.

"Some statements have been made that much time elapsed before a crew arrived to shut off the gas. The closing of the valve was not a first order of business insofar as the explosion had already occurred."

Mayor Donald S. Bell has written the Michigan Public Service Commission asking them to make an investigation of the Sunday evening explosion and fire which claimed five lives.

In a letter to the MPSC mailed Tuesday afternoon, Bell, also asked the commission to investigate the general gas situation in Birmingham and make any necessary recommendations concerning it.

Bell's action was a followup to a city commission taken Monday evening at its regular weekly meeting when it went on record as favoring a general investigation of the entire natural gas picture here.

Last Rites Held Here Yesterday for Fire Victims

A packed city commission room greeted commissioners as they took their places around a table. More than 75 local residents crowded the room to hear what state officials would take, if any.

Three Investigations On

Bell reassured the audience that the city was not only vitally interested in the Sunday explosion, but the general city conditions regarding gas leaks.

But rest assured that your city as we can get most of the facts, but only on Sunday disaster but not on general city conditions.

Several members of the audience, told commissioners of trouble they have had with Consumers regarding servicing of suspected gas leaks reported to the utility.

There was even discussion regarding Consumers' franchise and what steps were necessary to have it revoked.

Sand Facts to Egbert

Bell asked local residents to send City Manager Donald C. Egbert a message regarding gas conditions here.

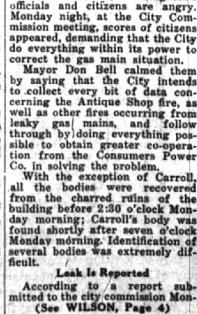
"We want all these facts with which to build the case," he emphasized. "If you have had any problem with Consumers and its servicing, by all means write Egbert about it. Every little bit of information helps."

Fire Chief Vern W. Griffith has the section of gas main which apparently broke and allowed the gas to seep through the ground into the Antique Shop.

It apparently was broken at the bottom by the weight of the ground above it.

(See INVESTIGATION, Page 4)

All mention of lower quality materials prohibited. ROYAL MATHEWS COMPANY. PHONE BRASS 1-1767.



LEE C. CARROLL