

EAST AFR. PROT
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REC'D
14 JUL 13

King 439
Govr
1913
June
Last previous Paper
Govr
2748

PETROL GO-DOWN AT KILLINDINI
DESTRUCTION BY FIRE

The findings of Board apptd to enquire into the cause of the outbreak. After further enquiry is of opinion that it would be improper to institute proceedings against Messrs O'Swald & Coy for damages. Encloses copy of Regulations which it is hoped will prevent the recurrence of a similar incident. Estd cost of rebuilding £200 which he will endeavour to meet from savings.

We Recd
Mr. Battersby

The explosion which the Comms forward, and which he hopes will prevent the recurrence of similar incident in the future as was the case May 11th 1912, and was accordingly in force when the fire occurred. They will be glad to have a copy of the regulations observed in future.

The cost of reconstruction of the 900000 will be hoped to be met from savings.

It is not proposed to take any action against Messrs O'Swald & Coy for damages, so in any event the Comms will be glad to have a copy of the regulations observed in future.

First Copy

PLEASE WRITE UP IN
ALONG WITH A.B.W.

Next subsequent Paper
Govr
26825

his further action remains uncertain

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V. J. R.

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C.O
24079

Recd
14 JUN 13

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,
NAIROBI.

BRITISH EAST AFRICA.

June 10th 1913.

EAST AFRICA PROTECTORATE

No. 439^a

17

Sir,

I have the honour to refer to your despatch No. 62 of the 30th of January respecting the destruction by fire of the Customs petrol go-down at Kilindini, and to transmit herewith for your information a copy of the finding of the Board appointed to enquire into the cause of the outbreak.

2. Upon receipt of this report I caused further investigation to be made with a view to ascertaining whether it would be feasible for the Government to institute proceedings against Messrs. O'Swald and Company for damages. It appears however that workmen in the employ of this company and also of Messrs. Smith Mackenzie had been for some time previously in the habit of repairing tins of petrol and kerosine on the particular spot where the fire broke out, in the immediate vicinity of the go-down, and that this fact was common knowledge to the Italian subordinates of the

Customs

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

LEWIS HARCOURT, P.C., M.P.,

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES,

DOWNING STREET, LONDON, S.W.

(2)

Customs Department, who unfortunately appear either to have taken it for granted that the use of this spot had been authorized by a superior officer or to have accepted the situation in ignorance of the serious consequences which might ensue. Unfortunately also it so happens that on the occasions on which the premises were visited by an European Officer, a circumstance of frequent occurrence, no operations of this nature were in progress.

3. It would therefore in my opinion be improper for the Government to take action against Messrs. O'Swald and Company. I enclose a copy of Regulations which have ~~been~~ been issued and which it is hoped will prevent the recurrence of a similar incident.

4. The estimated cost of the reconstruction of the Go-down is £200, which I will endeavour to meet from savings.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your humble, obedient servant,

C. Rowley

GOVERNOR.

FINDING

The petrol go-down at Kilindini is used for the purpose of storing petrol and benzine for importers. It is customary for the go-down to be opened from time to time for persons storing oil there to repair any tins which may be found to be leaking.

On the morning of the 22nd January a number of Washiri and Indians in the employ of Messrs. W.O'Swald and Company, oil importers, were engaged in removing from the go-down and soldering tins which were found to be leaking.

The tins of oil were brought out by the Washiris and stocked some on the verandah of the go-down, others between the Railway lines which run 5 feet in front of the verandah, and others in the space 5 feet wide on the far side of the Railway lines. An old tin containing a coal fire for heating soldering irons stood about 11 feet in front of the go-down amongst the petrol tins, a few of which had their caps, removed preparatory to new caps be soldered on. One of the Indian tin smiths did the soldering seated on a box some 2 feet from the fire for heating the soldering irons.

At about 12.30 whilst engaged in this manner and at a time when there were some 130 tins of petrol scattered about in the space only 13 feet wide in front of the go-down the Indian tin smith seated by the fire either let slip or shook a tin of petrol from which the cap had been removed with the result that the petrol either came into contact with the

the fire or the flames ignited setting fire to the surrounding tins the flames rapidly spreading over the 11 feet space in front of the go-down which was littered with tins and cases of petrol.

From Mr. Cox's evidence it appears that the outside wooden cases of the petrol tins at that time stored in the go-down were saturated with petrol from breakages on board ship and leakages in the go-down and we are of the opinion that the flames from the burning petrol outside the go-down either came into direct contact with these highly inflammable cases or ignited fumes arising from them thereby causing the total destruction of the go-down and its contents.

We find that the cause of the destruction of the Kilindini Petrol Go-down on the 22nd January was the accidental spilling by an Indian tin-smith of petrol close to a fire used for heating soldering irons standing about 11 feet from the go-down.

Sd/- C. S. Hemsted, Chairman
Sd/- Frank Stanger,
Town Magistrate
Sd/- F. Manson,
Asst. Engineer,
Uganda Railway.