

Fire Escapes for Workshops Proposed Sheffield By-Laws

Mr. Brooke Taylor Kitchin, Local Government Board Inspector, attended at the Sheffield Town Hall this morning to hold an inquiry with regard to certain by-laws which the Corporation propose to establish to secure the provision of better means of escape from small workshops in case of fire. There has been a great deal of opposition to these by-laws on the part of the manufacturers and property owners. Mr. H. Lang Coath, who conducted the case for the Corporation, called evidence to show that in many of the small workshops the means of entrance and exit were bad and that the staircases were dilapidated, narrow, badly and lighted.

Mr. J. H. Rodgers, Factory Inspector, said the proposed by-laws had the approval and support of the Home Office.

Mr. Green, chief building inspector, described the defects of a number of workshops. He admitted that in many cases the by-laws could be satisfied by the provision of an alternative staircase, but there were many others where it was difficult to see how such a staircase could be put in.

Mr. C. F. Bennett, who appeared for the Sheffield Property Owners' Association, cross-examined Mr. Green, who said he thought it would hamper the administration of the by-laws to put in the words, "such provision as may be reasonably required under the circumstances of each case."

Sir John Bingham has presented a memorial against the by-laws, but at the inquiry he said he was directly concerned, as he had a large factory which was outside the scope of the by-laws. His only interest was to see fair play to smaller property owners. He expressed the opinion that if the by-laws were passed the corporation would enforce them in the most hard and fast way.

Chief Officer Frost, of the Sheffield Fire Brigade, considered that the by-laws were very necessary. He could point to many places in the city where death would almost certainly occur in cases of fire.

Mr. Bennett, addressing the inspector, suggested several modifications of the by-laws.

Mr. Rex Wilson, on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce, said every kind of manufacturer objected to by-law No. 5, as they felt barred windows on the ground floor were necessary for the protection of their property. He also felt that the justices had no jurisdiction except as to the amount of the penalty, and the manufacturers would like it made clear that the magistrates were in a position to use their discretion. They would like an arbitration clause.