

The Gym Fire

BAIL FOR ACCUSED FIXED AT £80

Bail at £80 each was fixed by Sheriff Malcolm at Dundee yesterday in the case of four men at present in custody in connection with the recent fire which occurred in the Public Gymnasium in the Ward Road when the building was completely gutted.

Mr. J. Grafton Lawson, solicitor, supported the application for bail for James Weir (26), labourer, 165 Hilltown; Thos. McIver (23), labourer, 178 Brook Street; Frederick Gow (28), discharged soldier, 27 North Ellen Street; and Donald Gordon Stephen, labourer, 151 Victoria Road. Mr Lawson said the police alleged that accused were the last men to be in the Gymnasium on the evening prior to the outbreak of fire.

The accused had been out of employment for some little time. Two of them were ex-soldiers undergoing treatment and in receipt of an allowance, while the only means of existence for the other two was the unemployment grant from the Government. In these circumstances they were unable to provide any bail at all, and any bail that would be provided in the event of his Lordship granting the application could only come from friends. In a case of this kind it was absolutely necessary that the agent conducting the defence should have these men at call without having to go to the prison any time he wanted information. There had been no complaint against any of the accused previously, and under the circumstances he suggested bail to the extent of £40 for each.

Mr W.F. Mackintosh, Procurator-Fiscal stated that, whilst not opposing bail, yet he pressed for a substantial sum to be fixed. These men were out of employment, and through the medium of the Lord Provost the Gymnasium was given to the unemployed for the purpose of holding meetings and having a place to resort to. Some of the rooms in front were used as hairdressing rooms, there being a number of hairdressers among the unemployed, whilst boot repairing was also being carried out in the establishment. They were paying no rent, and they were getting fire and light gratis. The hall came eventually to be required for transport purposes, and intimation was made to these men through their Secretary that the hall would require to be given up. The fire broke out practically on the last night they were to use the hall. The offence was a bailable one, but a very serious one, especially under the circumstances.

Sheriff Malcolm - It is not really a question of guilt or innocence at this stage, but a question of can you ensure these men will stand their trial/

Mr Mackintosh - The amount of bail is too small.

Sheriff Malcolm - Is there any suggestion with regard to a motive or a suggestion of anything political?

Mr Mackintosh - I don't think you would call it political; it is more social. I suggested to Mr Lawson £100 as bail, and he walked away very hurriedly.

(Laughter)

His Lordship - Did you think he went away to get it? (Laughter)

Mr Mackintosh pressed for bail to be fixed at £100 each, and after deliberation Sheriff Malcolm fixed the bail in each case at £80.

It is expected that the bail money will be deposited tomorrow.