EDISON'S MAN IN TILT WITH E-2 INQUIRERS

Lieut. Fisher Accuses Hutchison of Making an Untruthful Statement.

QUARRELED OVER A WORD

Navy Officer Maintained Battery Cells Were Defective—Remarks Stricken Out.

Lieutenant Joseph O. Fisher, U. S. N., Recorder of the Naval Board of Inquiry, appointed by Secretary of the Navy Daniels to investigate the explosion on the submarine E-2, characterized as untruthful a statement made in the course of the inquiry yesterday by Miller Reese Hutchison, the personal representative of Thomas A. Edison, who was assigned by the Edison Storage Battery Company to install the Edison batteries on the E-2. The remark of Lieutenant Fisher indicates the tension that now marks the sessions of the board, which held its sixth session at the Navy Yard yesterday.

The 200 cells of the two Edison batteries that were installed on the E-2 have been removed from the submarine and placed in one of the navy yard storage buildings, where they were closely scrutinized by the members of the board yesterday. Along with them was exhibited a new Edison cell which has never been used and which is believed to be in perfect condition.

The tilt between Lieutenant Fisher and Mr. Hutchison came in the course of an argument between Commander McGrann, U. S. N., retired, who is counsel for the Edison Storage Battery Company, and Lieutenant Fisher as to the use of the word "defective," which was used by Lieutenant Fisher in a question the purpose of which was to bring into the court record the condition of the cells prior to the explosion.

Calls Statement Untrue.

Lieutenant Fisher contended that the cells were not effective and that therefore they must be defective. Commander McGrann insisted that the word as used reflected on the condition of the cells at the time of installation. Finally Lieutenant Fisher went to a desk in the room to consult a dictionary as to the real meaning of the word in dispute. At this point Mr. Hutchison interjected a remark to the effect that the cells were not only not defective, but added that they could be put into operation as they were at that moment. Lieutenant Fisher turned quickly and faced the court.

"That statement," he said, "is untrue, and I object to the statement being made to this court by an interested party to these proceedings."

"What I meant—" said Mr. Hutchison, but he did not finish, Commander McGrann telling him to be silent.

"I object," said Commander McGrann calmly, "to the bearing of the Judge Advocate of this board, and also to his language, and ask that the language be withdrawn and an apology tendered."

"I apologize for my bearing, but my language stands," Lieutenant Fisher replied.

Captain Bullard, President of the board, then ruled that everything that had been said subsequent to the asking of the disputed question be stricken from the record.

Lieutenant W. S. Anderson, U. S. N., was the first witness called yesterday. He had superintended the removal of the cells from the batteries in the E-2, and his testimony concerned the condition of the cells as he found them when he dismantled the batteries. Lieutenant Anderson testified that draining plugs were missing from several of the cells; that on others the filling caps were charred, and that on others the vent trap cap was gone. Lieutenant Fisher thereupon put the question in which the word "defective" was used, and the tilt between Mr. Hutchison and Fisher followed.

At the afternoon session the members of the board returned to the room where the cells were on view, and spent more than an hour in examining them. Then they returned to the court-martial room and resumed the taking of testimony.

Hutchison Corrects Record.

Commander McGrann asked that Lamar Lyndon, a consulting chemist of 30 Church Street, be called as an expert witness to testify on matters pertaining to hydrogen gas and its action under various conditions. When Mr. Lyndon admitted he had not seen an Edison battery in several years Captain Bullard excused him.

Mr. Hutchison was then given an opportunity to read and correct the stenographic report of the testimony he gave last week. He asked that the references to him in the testimony as "personal representative" of Mr. Edison and as "chief engineer" of the Edison Storage Battery Company be stricken out, whereupon Lieutenant Fisher asked him if he had not used those titles in a communication he had addressed to the Bureau of Steam Engineering in the Navy Department at Washington. He admitted that he had, but insisted the correct description of his present status would be "naval representative of the Edison Storage Battery Company."

Last week, in an interview given to a newspaper reporter, Mr. Hutchison, referring to the ventilation of the E-2, said that he did not make any suggestions to Lieutenant Cooke, for the reason that he did not feel called upon to tell an officer how to conduct affairs on his own boat. He said it would have been just as sensible for him to tell an engineer to keep water in his boilers while the fires were going.

"What was the analogy you intended to convey by that remark?" asked Lieutenant Fisher, reading from the newspaper report of the interview.

"The improper handling of a boiler," replied the witness.

The analogy, added the witness, was that as an engineer should always know the condition of his boilers, so should a submarine commander know the situation in his boat as regards ventilation.

"Do you consider yourself as an expert in matters pertaining to submarines?" asked Captain Bullard.

"I do not," replied Mr. Hutchison.

The inquiry will be resumed at 10 o'clock this morning.

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