

Extract from the leading article in the "Clarion" of the 22nd August, 1918, on the fire in Belize by which the Court House and other valuable buildings were destroyed.

"But, if the Fire Brigade and the Police were remiss what must be said of the men of Belize. It makes us ashamed of our countrymen to think that they should rejoice at misfortune and indulge in seditious speech such as was heard among the crowd. That there is a dangerous and ugly spirit abroad has long been apparent to us, but never could we have believed that the infection was so widespread. If ever we are to accomplish anything that spirit must be stamped out with an iron heel and firmly re-pressed. Do these people realize that through the act of incendiarism this Colony - they themselves - have been saddled with a tremendous debt which will have to be repaid? Who but the people pay taxes? And taxes must be raised to rebuild all that which has been so ruthlessly destroyed. Such acts as these put a blot on the fair name and fame of this Colony and put our aspirations after a representative form of Government backwards many years. Is this some new form of loyalty? We cannot call ourselves loyal to our country when we put her to shame and commit such Hunnish acts.

"Men were called upon to render assistance but refused, and some in the crowd were dastardly enough to cut the hose pipe. Had the Police been under proper control acts such as these might have been prevented. Besides this looting seemed universal. Instead of aiding distress, the fire was but a cover for acts of larceny. One boy was caught in Mr. Grant's house going off with a pocket full of silver spoons, others stole eatables and drinkables, whilst others burst down partitions without rhyme or reason.

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"We sincerely hope that some reforms will be the outcome of the evil that has befallen, but judging from past experience fear that hope will be blighted."