

## BLAZE WIPES OUT OPEN BOARD OF TRADE BUILDING; RENDERS LABOR ORGANIZATIONS HOMELESS

Fire early today destroyed the Open Board of Trade building, 331-33 S. LaSalle street, made a dozen labor organizations occupying upper floors of the structure homeless, endangered hundreds of guests in nearby hotels, and resulted in a property loss of nearly \$500,000.

Valuable papers and records of the different labor organizations were burned, but it is expected that the vaults, in which the more important documents were kept, have held, and the papers will not be damaged.

Incendiarism is suspected, and a searching investigation into the cause of the fire is being made. Search is being made for four men who were seen to leave the building hurriedly at an early hour this morning. Shortly after their departure the fire broke out. A muffled explosion was heard, and in a moment the building was a seething furnace of flame. The first started on the second floor.

There were numerous thrilling rescues during the fire. Attaches of adjoining hotels worked heroically to get all the guests out safely. Hundreds of them fled to the street in scanty attire.

Thirty fire companies battled to stay the progress of the flames and confine them to the Board of Trade building. In spite of their efforts the fire damaged adjoining buildings.

They are: Commerce building, 325 South LaSalle street, six

stories; Traders' building, 319 South LaSalle street, six stories; Kaiserhof hotel, 324 South Clark street, eight stories; Stafford hotel, 122-24 West Van Buren street, five stories; Hotel Victoria, 332 South Clark street, seven stories; Princess hotel, 323 South Clark street, three stories; Grace hotel, Jackson boulevard and Clark street, six stories; Van Buren hotel, in West Van Buren street, five stories.

The inside of the Open Board of Trade building was completely gutted. The open well above the dome created a draft, and flames licked up the flimsy woodwork in a few moments. Falling floors and ceilings endangered the lives of firemen, who fought the fire from the roof. The walls stood.

Communication between Chicago and the outside world was cut off for a time, operators of the Western Union and Postal Telegraph companies being forced from their keys by the heat.

How great the damage to labor organization, which occupied the upper four floors of the burned building, will be, cannot be estimated until the fireproof vaults are opened, and the condition of their documents in them is disclosed.

The Bindery Women's union records were totally destroyed. In the Women's Trade Union League the loss to papers was heavy. The vault in the office of the Chicago Federation of Labor contained most of the valuable