

59/23.

FIRE! - BIGGEST SINCE THE BLITZ.

Nearly 200 yards of one side of Ilford High Road was ablaze. It began in the early evening and seemed to spread as though oil had been sprayed over the buildings. One of the biggest furniture stores in the country, another store and some shops were already past saving. To prevent still more premises being engulfed, fire brigades rushed to Ilford from as far off as Hammersmith in the west, Southend in the east. 250 firemen, police and civil defence men fought, hour by hour in an all out effort to contain the roaring blaze. For some time they seemed to be waging a losing battle.

When it was just light next morning the stark scene revealed the appalling devastation. Not since the big raids of the war has anything like it been known in England. And now it was possible to piece together the tale of disaster. Apparently the first alarm was given by the conductor of a passing bus. He saw a red glow in the furniture store, but by that time the fire had the buildings in an unshakable grip that grew stronger with every second. Now fantastically hung the skelton of the bridge between the store and its warehouse. Nearby houses were burnt out. Several families were evacuated. No one could yet reliably compute the damage. It is almost certain to run into millions. One mercy - there was no loss of life.