

FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 185: 1916 (THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE ENGINEERS)

By Richard Schulte

The Report of International Association of Fire Engineers (Fire Chiefs) presented at the twentieth Annual Meeting of the National Fire Protection Association provides an incite into the thinking of the fire chiefs on the issues of both sprinkler protection and fire prevention in 1916. The following is the transcript of this Report:

"The President: The International Association of Fire Engineers, being the fire chiefs of the United States and Canada. C. H. Henderson, Chief of Fire Department, Bradford, Pa. is the official delegate.

Report of International Association of Fire Engineers.

Chief Henderson: In reporting on the work accomplished along fire prevention lines during the past year by the International Association of Fire Engineers, I would respectfully present the report of Chief John Kenlon of New York, Chairman of the Committee on Fire Prevention of the I. A. F. E. for 1915. This report is most comprehensive and so clear and concise in its many details, that I feel assured all who are actively interested in modern fire prevention methods will appreciate its worth and find it of inestimable value and assistance in carrying out fire prevention measures in their various phases.

For the year 1916 special committees have been appointed to report on the following.

"Rules to govern a standard test of theatrical scenery."

"To investigate ways and means whereby automatic sprinkler systems may be used to best advantage by fire departments as fire defence auxiliaries."

"To consider the character of compulsory requirements for installations of automatic sprinklers."

*Fire Prevention Topic. "Does the menace of the Wood Shingle justify its Abolition?"
By Chief Thomas W. Haney, Jacksonville, Fla.*

The Fire Prevention Committee for 1916, of which Chief George L. Johnson of Waltham, Mass., is Chairman, are working hard upon the various subjects assigned them and will present an exhaustive report of their findings at the Providence meeting of the I. A. F. E., August 28 to September 1. I have been assigned "Fire Prevention Methods in the Smaller Cities" and it may interest the members of the National Fire Protection Association to hear some of the data gathered by me in the preparation of this paper.

I find there are about three hundred and thirty-five cities scattered throughout the United States with populations ranging from 10,000 to 25,000.

*In a large percentage of these smaller cities active fire prevention work is being carried on. **New laws and ordinances have been framed and put into execution that have revolutionized the long dormant inactive laws and ordinances that were not adapted to the growth of these cities.** There are a few small cities that have not advanced to any great extent along progressive fire prevention lines.*

The cause assigned by three of these cities for their being non-progressive is lack of interest in modern fire prevention methods by the proper authorities and indifference of the community toward any civic improvement.

The lack of proper fire prevention methods in seven small cities was assigned to the too frequent change in the head of the fire department and the fear of newly appointed fire chiefs of incurring the enmity of the citizens by the enforcement of any ordinances that might cause them inconvenience.

In many of the smaller cities the office of Fire Marshal is combined with that of the Chief of the Fire Department. This has many advantages as it enables the fire chief to establish a very efficient Fire Prevention Bureau at fire department headquarters.

Bonfire ordinances for the control of waste and rubbish fires are effective in many small cities. Many of the bonfire ordinances positively prohibit the burning of rubbish and waste material after twelve o'clock noon. Such an ordinance has been in force in many cities for the past five years.

I find that the ladies civic societies have been very active in fire prevention work in many cities and have brought about many needed improvements in their home cities by their energetic work along fire prevention lines. In many cities they have been responsible for annual Clean-Up days.

I find that some fire prevention officials are working under great disadvantages in their cities, more especially in the states that have no State Fire Marshal to give them assistance.

I could give you perhaps hundreds of instances where fire preventive measures are being adopted and ordinances for better fire prevention are being framed to better conditions now existing.

I cannot close without giving you the contents of a letter received by me in the pursuit of fire prevention knowledge. This is the reply I received from a letter written to a fire chief regarding fire prevention ordinances in his city.

Dear Chief,

I got your letter asking about fire prevention ordinances in force in this Burg. Well we might have a fire prevention ordinance here, but if we have I never saw it and what is more, I don't want to see it. I aint going to spend my time trying to prevent fires here in this town by a hell of a sight. I want fires and want them bad. It is now one year since we had a fire and if we don't soon get another I will be forgetting that I am a fire chief and lose my job. If you know of a real live Firebug that is out of a job, send him on, I need him bad. Do you know Chief, I am actually perishing for a good whiff of wood smoke. Don't ever insult me again by mentioning prevention of fires.

Yours anxiously waiting for just one little burst of flame.

..... Chief

This city seems already amply protected if as the chief writes, a year has passed since they had a fire. Fire protection does not appeal to this fire chief. (Laughter and applause.)

*The President: **It is obvious from Chief Henderson's remarks that our fire-fighters are rapidly becoming fire preventionists also.** (Applause.) Thank you, Chief. The National Implement and Vehicle Association. Mr. Le B. Turner."*

Of particular interest in this Report are the remarks on sprinkler protection. Even in 1916, the Fire Engineers (Fire Chiefs) recognized the importance of sprinkler protection in assisting fire departments with fire fighting.

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