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FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 32: THE BRITISH FIRE PREVENTION COMMITTEE- PUBLICATION No. 1 (1897)

By Richard Schulte

The publications of the British Fire Prevention Committee are included in what are known as the “Red Books”. Publication No. 1 appears to have been published in 1897 and is titled “*What is Fire Protection?*” authored by Edwin O. Sachs, an architect in Great Britain. The following are a few excerpts from Publication No. 1:

“I should first explain what I understand fire protection to be. The term is, I am afraid, too often misunderstood. . . .In reality the fire brigade as such has but a minor role in a rational system of protection. . . .”

“Fire protection, as I understand it, is a combination of fire prevention, fire combat- ing, and fire research.”

“Preventive measures may be the result of private initiative, but as a rule they are defined by the local authority, and contained partly in Building Acts, and partly in separate codes of fire-survey regulations. . . .”

“As to general research work I would mention that there are several cities where, of late years, a number of experts have been regularly employed to superintend a series of experiments on the resistance to fire of iron, steel, wood, and stone.”

“Safe construction enhances the value of a property, and the protective measures need not occasion much additional expense.”

“By-the-by, when speaking of the separation of minor “risks”, the dangerous lift wells, skylights, and shaft openings should not be forgotten.”

“Division of “risks”, common sense construction, and proper staircase accommoda- tion are really all that fire protection requires, and where the special Building Act clauses have been kept within the lines I have indicated, there has been little friction and discontent.”

“In closing I cannot omit to point out that in towns where no independent ambulance corps exists, some of the firemen are often trained to work as ambulance men.”

It's rather interesting to note that many of the concepts of what is considered good building fire protection were known more than a century ago. While building fire protection was in its infancy in the late 1890's, the foundation for what was to follow was being established concurrently in both Great Britain and in the United States.

Many of the British Fire Prevention Committee Red Books have been digitized by Google and can be viewed on the internet. The excerpts above were taken from a digitized version of the Red Books provided by Google.

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