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FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 37: 8TH ANNUAL NFPA MEETING-1904 (REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE ENGINEERS MEETING)

By Richard Schulte

In addition to sending delegates to represent the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) at the International Fire Prevention Congress held in London in July 1903, the Association also sent delegates to the International Association of Fire Engineers meeting held in September 1903. The following is the text of the address given by the chairman of the NFPA delegation at the Fire Engineers meeting:

***“REPORT OF DELEGATES TO THE MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE ENGINEERS.*”**

The Secretary read the following report of the delegates to the meeting of the International Association of Fire Engineers:

Address before the Thirty-first Annual Convention of the International Association of Fire Engineers, held at Atlantic City, N. J., September 8-11, 1903, by Wm. B. Kelly, of Philadelphia, Chairman of the Delegation from the National Fire Protection Association.

As you are aware, the National Fire Protection Association is an organization composed of men interested in Fire Insurance, and the objects of the Association are “to promote the science and improve the methods of fire protection; to obtain and circulate information on this subject, and secure co-operation in matters of common interest.”

This Association has had the honor and privilege of being represented by delegates to your former assemblages and we feel we are in a sense, an important adjunct to your organization, in that by the investigations and researches made by the members of this Association, into the science of and improved methods for fire protection, we are to that extent helpful to the best efficiency of Fire Departments by bringing to your attention directly and indirectly the devices that have recommended themselves, after full and careful study by men who are versed in hydraulics and water distribution; so that the most effective application can be made for extinguishment of fire, with the least danger to and labor of the firemen.

In former days Fire Insurance Companies devoted themselves to the one purpose of indemnifying property owners against loss; but little attention was given to the means for extinguishing fires. *The growth and improvement of the country, the aggregation of enormous values in limited areas and the resultant liability to excessive losses, increase the requirement for insurance beyond the supply and created a demand for better construction and protection. With the better building construction and expansion of trade, the area and heights of buildings were so extended as to make improved methods of protection essential.*

Municipal authorities having failed to appreciate the full importance of this, the interests of the public and Insurance Companies required that standards should be formulated such as would at once enable them to supply the requirement for larger individual lines of insurance and not hazard their capital beyond prudent limits. *By gradual stages the scientific extinguishment of fires has become a part of the investigations of fire underwriters.* Inventions for which their promoters claimed advantages did not stand the test of fire and frequently caused excessive losses, both to property-holder and underwriter, *resulting in the formation of the National Fire Protection Association, by men within the ranks of Fire Insurance,* whose education and inclination lead them to the study of fire protection devise, safe building construction and kindred subjects.

The aims of firemen and fire underwriters are identical. Although pursued from different directions, we each seeks the prevention of loss from fire. What the firemen cannot save, the Insurance Companies must pay for. This identity of interest is the justification for our meeting together in conference – *to save or reduce the enormous fire waste, amounting to some hundreds of millions annually.* This discussion of questions relating to this general subject cannot but result beneficially to ourselves and to the public.

Our delegates to your last meeting presented three suggestions, and asked your co-operation to introduce and enforce them. On behalf of the National Fire Protection Association, we tender thanks for the action taken by your body and for the support already rendered in this line.

Much progress has been made in the installment of the devices alluded to by the Committee of this Association at your last session. *High pressure water service pipes have been completed in Philadelphia, and soon the permanent pumping station will be finished. The City Council of Chicago now has before it an ordinance which will give that city the benefit of abundant water under high pressure and make it available to the firemen for effective use in the high buildings in the business section.* Many of the conditions in this ordinance are based upon the recommendations of the Association which our delegates represent, and we hope with the continued cordial support and co-operation of your body, to see *such improvements in the facilities afforded by all large cities, as will reduce to a minimum the labors and risks of the firemen, and so protect the aggregated values in all commercial centers, that probabilities of future conflagrations will be remote, if not eliminated.*

We have no suggestions to offer for your consideration to-day, but refer again to the intimate relation which your business and ours bear to each other and to the public at large, in saving so far as is within our power, the wealth of the country from being wiped out by fire in large annual volumes; and thus permanently removed from bearing the proportionate share of the public tax in support of our government.

With this in mind, it might not be out of place to suggest that each representative present confer freely with local Underwriters' Associations, to the end that the facilities afforded in the records of those offices be availed of, as to the means provided at and within the various buildings for extinguishing fires.

Lists are on file of all buildings having automatic sprinklers, standpipes and other special facilities, which will be freely and gladly furnished when applied for.

We thank you, gentlemen, for your attention and the privilege accorded us.

*Wm. B. Kelly,
Wm. McDevitt,
John W. Tatum.*

While the address to the International Association of Fire Engineers was brief, the address did an excellent job of summarizing the goals and purpose of the NFPA and also the accomplishments already achieved by the Association (in conjunction with the National Board of Fire Underwriters and Underwriters' Laboratories).

It is worth noting that the impetus for private fire protection in buildings, as well as for some public fire protection features, came from the fire insurance underwriters and that the underwriters kept complete records on both sprinkler and standpipe system installations in various buildings. This practice of keeping records on (practically) all sprinkler and standpipe system installations (by insurance interests) would continue for roughly another seventy years.

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