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FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 52: 1907 (ELEVENTH ANNUAL NFPA MEETING- THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS)

By Richard Schulte

The 11th annual meeting of the National Fire Protection Association took place in New York on May 22nd, 23rd and 24th, 1907. As customary, the meeting opened with an address by the president of the Association. The following is the text of the president's address:

"The President, Mr. C. A. Hexamer, called Vice President Anderson to the chair and thereupon made the following address:

ADDRESS OF PRESIDENT C. A. HEXAMER.

Gentlemen – The National Fire Protection Association has now completed the first decade of its existence. The active membership list contains 58 members; there are 782 associate members and 325 subscribing members. From year to year a steady and healthy growth of the Association is recorded, evidencing the fact that the work of the Association toward betterments in construction and protection against loss by fire is being appreciated by professional men interested throughout the land.

The report of the Executive Committee, and the Secretary, will present to you in detail the condition and work of the Association during the past year. The report of the Treasurer shows a healthy financial condition.

*The Committee on Special Hazards and Fire Records, through the **Quarterly Bulletin**, continues to be in close touch with the entire membership, and I can only repeat what I have said before, that the value of the work of this Committee, covering as it does the theory of fire hazard and the investigation of fires, cannot be over estimated.*

The Committee on Devices and Materials has during the year given attention to the detail of construction of the more important fire retardent devices. Tests continue to be made at the Laboratory at Chicago, the result of which, together with the system of factory inspection of standard metal frames for wired glass, and of standard tin clad fire doors, recently inaugurated, will undoubtedly result in marked improvement in the construction of these devices.

The cordial relations existing between this Association and the National Board of Fire Underwriters continues unimpaired, and the reports of various standing committees of the National Board show that the work of the Association toward betterment in construction and protection are appreciated and approved.

*As your presiding officer, it was my privileges to be present and to represent the Association at the dedication of this building -- a grand monument to the public spirit and munificence of the donor, **Mr. Andrew Carnegie**, and the grandest home for United Engineering Societies in the world. In choosing the building for its headquarters and for the place of its annual convention when held in this city, **the National Fire Protection Association has assumed its position among the prominent engineering societies of the country to which it, in my judgment, is justly entitled.***

*At the last Convention, referring to the report of the Committee on Statistics of the National Board of Underwriters, **I called your attention to a comparison of per capita fire loss in this country and six prominent countries in Europe, the former being \$2.47; the latter 33 cents. Based on population of 70,000,000, the per capita fire loss in the United States for 1906, including the San Francisco loss, is \$3.30, and without the San Francisco loss, \$2.25. Due to the San Francisco fire the percentage of loss to premiums received by all fire insurance companies reporting to the Insurance Department of the State of New York for the year 1906, shows the unprecedented high loss ratio of 96.8 per cent.** These figures are startling and the condition responsible for such results, well merit the consideration of the highest legislative bodies of the nation.*

I am satisfied that when the time comes for the national legislative bodies to consider national laws and regulations tending toward the reduction of the great annual fire loss, the work of the N. F. P. A. toward standardizing fire protection devices and toward uniform requirements for betterments in construction will form the basis upon which such laws are framed.

I repeatedly suggested to you the value of consultation and co-operation with the manufacturers of fire protection devices so that the standards prepared by our committee may have the advantage of the experience and knowledge of the manufacturer of the particular device under discussion. I have suggested to you the advisability of bringing this Association in closer touch with the national trade and manufacturing bodies, so that joint committees could give consideration to the question of construction and protection of the various manufacturing buildings. I would now urge upon you the consideration of some plan by which delegates representing this organization may be sent to every National Trade and Manufacturers Convention for the purpose primarily of studying the conditions and requirements of each trade and manufacturing industry, but also prepared to make suggestions and give advice toward betterments of conditions tending toward a possible loss of life and property by fire.

In closing, I wish to extend a hearty welcome to the official delegates of our active members, and to our associate and subscribing members present, trusting that those who have been with us from year to year, as well as those who are with us for the first time, will unreservedly give us the benefit of their knowledge and experience during our deliberations.

The work of the Association is running smoothly and on an even keel. As your presiding officer I have no special recommendation to make.

Mr. Anderson: Gentlemen, what is your pleasure with reference to the very interesting address of our President?

Mr. Cabot: Mr. Chairman, I move that the address be printed in the proceedings, and the recommendations, especially those with reference to delegates, be referred to the incoming Executive Committee.

The motion was seconded, and the question having been duly put was declared carried unanimously.

President Hexamer thereupon resumed the chair.”

Source: *Proceedings of the National Fire Protection Association, 1907-1908*

Of most interest in the President's address is the comparison of the per capita fire loss between countries in Europe and the United States.

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