

Wednesday Afternoon Session

May 7, 1947

THE Conference reconvened at 2:05 P.M., Chairman Fleming presiding.

Chairman Fleming. Will the meeting please come to order?

This afternoon we will take up another aspect of fire protection. In other words, we will get right down to cases with the man whose job it is to put out the fires which the rest of us carelessly start.

We expect a great deal of our firemen. We take it as a matter of course that they will respect our property and save our lives, if need be, no matter how many cigarettes we fling carelessly about. The records show that they have not had too much cooperation from the rest of us these last few years. I would not blame them a bit if they took advantage of this present opportunity to lecture us on our bad habits.

I have the pleasure of introducing Mr. Charles A. Delaney, president of the International Association of Fire Chiefs. Mr. Delaney. [*Applause.*]

Mr. Charles A. Delaney. Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, the very purpose of this Fire Prevention Conference clearly indicates the immediate need of action to safeguard and protect human life and property from the destruction of fire. The calling of this Conference is a very commendable act on the part of the President of the United States at this time because of his being burdened almost to the limit of human endurance with the more complex problems of the nation.

The presence of so many individuals who have seen fit to leave their homes and respective business and have traveled long distances for the purpose of attending the Conference clearly indicates that there does exist a widespread, deep-seated interest in actually reducing fire losses to a minimum.

The promotion of fire prevention at local levels has been practiced for many years, and a reasonable degree of success has been attained. However, despite the fire prevention activities in which many of our communities are engaged, and with public officials diligently endeavoring to interest the general public in fire prevention practices, the fire loss experience of recent months from the stand point of both life and property proves that to date we have failed to keep pace with the need for the development of more effective means and methods of dealing with the problem.

We have all observed that following in the wake of tragic death-dealing and devastating fires there is invariably a wave of indignation and concern which swells over the entire nation, the immediate result being that every rational, thinking individual becomes fire prevention minded

and conscious of the possibility that a like tragedy may strike his family, his home, his place of business, or may otherwise have a direct effect on his well-being. But it is regrettable that the enthusiasm is all too short-lived. Except in such cases where there is an immediate and direct effect, the occurrence is soon forgotten.

Because of the numerous fires in which mass destruction of life has occurred, the concern of the public is at present aroused to an extremely high pitch, and we of the fire service are besieged with inquiries as to what measures are being taken in our communities to avoid the tragic experience of the stricken localities.

In many instances various demands for immediate action are being made upon public officials. Therefore, it is most appropriate that we are assembled here in Washington on this occasion, and it behooves us to direct our endeavors toward keeping this spirit of cooperation and enthusiasm alive until such time as the rising trend is halted, reversed, and reduced.

The rising trend of fire losses is not wholly the fault of the fire protection services, public officials, or any of the various organizations having direct economic interests in such losses, though each does have its own weaknesses. The major fault apparently lies in the fact that too few individuals have been made to realize that regardless of our station in life, we each have a responsibility in the scheme of American social and economic structure. Therefore, essential cooperation is lacking.

The vast number of fire chiefs attending this Conference is concrete evidence that the public fire protection services are ready to do their part and discharge their duty in every respect. However, in many instances fire departments are sorely handicapped due to insufficient personnel, obsolete and unreliable apparatus, worn-out fire hose, and personnel discontented because of inadequate rates of pay, undesirable working conditions, unsuitable quarters, and lack of modern appliances for the extinguishment of fire and for the protection of the firefighting forces.

The International Association of Fire Chiefs and other firemen's organizations are wholeheartedly behind this Conference, and we are confident that the reports of the various committees will point out ways and means by which the present difficulties may be overcome and fire prevention made a reality.

I wish at this point to commend the secretaries and chairmen of the various committees for the wonderful job that they have done in assembling the reports of their respective committees. While we do not agree wholeheartedly in everything that they have covered, nevertheless, as a fire chief, I wish to say that there will be something come out this Conference that will benefit the entire nation.

I would like at this moment to again announce the meeting proposed for this evening for the fire chiefs. Yesterday the announcement was made to those who are members of the International Association. However, the meeting is intended for all fire chiefs. The meeting will be in the United States Chamber of Commerce Building at Connecticut Avenue and H Street at 8 o'clock. We hope to have a good attendance. The meeting is one of unofficial nature, but we do feel that

it gives us an opportunity to point out what has been going on among the officers of the association. Thank you. *[Applause.]*

Chairman Fleming. Thank you, Mr. Delaney. That was an excellent speech, but I think perhaps you let us off a little too easily. Maybe the next speaker will be less polite.

Mr. George J. Richardson has been secretary-treasurer of the International Association of Fire Fighters, an organization of more than 60,000 members in 800 cities, since 1920. He was born in Winchester, Mass., but removed in 1911 to Vancouver, British Columbia. The following year he entered the Vancouver Fire Department. He was a member of the first firemen's organization of the American Federation of Labor founded in Canada and has served as vice president of the international organization. He has been active for many years in the work of the National Fire Protection Association, the National Fire Waste Council, and in various fire schools. He was a member of the Advisory Committee of the United States Office of Civil Defense and later was sent as an observer for the Army and Navy to the Pacific combat area. He is a member of our Conference Coordinating Committee. Mr. Richardson. *[Applause.]*

Mr. George J. Richardson. General Fleming, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, let me express my appreciation to the Conference officials for the opportunity to speak today. I am going to speak on the subject, The Firefighter of Today.

History has many heroes whose martial renown has freed the world, whose daring and wonderful exploits have been responsible for changing the boundaries of nations and, in fact, have changed the very face of the earth.

We have heroes in the fire service, heroes who have given their lives that others may live. Our heroes die with their hearts aglow, with the passion for saving men, women and children; they die because of the carelessness or the criminal greed of others who are willing to make death traps in order that they might reap the harvest of ill-gotten gain. Firefighters who are killed in the performance of their duties have no redress – they are gone. No citizen would knowingly contribute to causing the death of a firefighter, yet many do so unknowingly by their carelessness. With the increase in the number of fire alarms and fires, the number of firefighters killed has also increased. Any action that would prevent the loss of one firefighter's life would justify this conference.

Patriotism and love of liberty and service, the most noble motives that can fire the heart of man, are the ingredients that make up the firefighter of our American fire service. He represents no interest that is private, no privilege that is narrow; he represents no sect, no ism, or no clique. His service is available to the entire community; he responds to a fire in the humblest cottage just as quickly as to one in a palatial home. To us of the fire service he is a firefighter – in other words, a fighter of fire. Yet, strange as it may seem, fire is the friend of mankind and during the progress of the world, fire has been the most important ally in our modern and scientific developments. Fire is that which drives the wheels of commerce; fire is that which lights the highways of civilization; fire is one of the most useful forces in our country today – our very existence depends on the controlled use of fire.

I have the privilege today of representing the firefighters of today; the firefighters whose predecessors had the foresight and vision to form an association known throughout the world as the International Association of Fire Fighters. Today the firefighters from private to chief are members of our association, in over 800 cities in the United States and Canada.

We are here with you today because of the carelessness, the ignorance, the crime, and the neglect of others to take the ordinary safety precautions in the use of fire. The problem before us today is “What to do to prevent fires?” We have all participated in safety campaigns and we all know of the success of the campaigns against the epidemics of the past. Our greatest task is to fight that unsocial thing, that carelessness of man who lives unconscious of the rights and the interests of his neighbor; that man who toys with the great power of fire, irrespective of its effect. Our fight should be against that greed in society that will put shoddy work into its buildings and their materials, and that wretched spirit that would jeopardize the safety of the occupants in order to hear the jingling coins drop into their coffers. Our fight should be directed against the man who “fires to profit” or “burns for cash.” We have many of those types of fires and find great difficulty in convicting those guilty even when they are apprehended.

The problem before this Conference is not a new one. The fact that it is a serious problem is the reason you are here. President Truman is the first President who has had the foresight to do something about the problem of preventing fires with their resultant loss of life and property. He has called this Conference together and has told you of his sincere interest in finding a solution that will reduce this unnecessary loss of life and property.

When the President announced that a conference would be held, the International Association of Fire Fighters immediately advised him that its officers and members were wholeheartedly behind him and that the facilities of our organization, together with the services of its officers, were available to assist him in making the conference a success. Since that time representatives of our Association have collaborated with every committee in preparing the technical and scientific reports that have been presented to the Conference.

President Truman, while a Senator from Missouri, became very familiar with the work and objects of our association. He was one of many Senators who voted unanimously in favor of a bill, which Congress passed, permitting the firefighters of our Nation’s Capital to join our association. He was aware then, as he is now, that when any member of a fire department becomes a member of our association he becomes a member of a labor organization which has in its constitution the provision that “We shall not strike or take active part in any sympathetic strike, since the work of firefighters is different from that performed by any other workers, as we are employed to perform the duties of protecting the lives and property of communities in case of fire or other serious hazards.” [*Applause.*] Because of that knowledge he was familiar with the real courage and fidelity of the members of our organization. He knew that he and all his fellow Americans could depend on the members of the fire service to render every service in an endeavor to find a solution to the problem of preventing fires.

On September 5, 1946, President Truman wrote to the delegates and members of our association:

I am aware of your organization’s greatest contribution in the field of fire prevention and fire protection. The work of your association in behalf of the members of the fire service of

the Nation has been outstanding. The improvements that have been made for the members of the fire service are the direct result of the work of your association.

The President of the United States is probably more familiar with our organization than many attending this conference, and it is for that reason I mention that our organization is unique as a labor organization, in that strikes are not permitted. You, and every other citizen, have been reading about strikes. We all deplore the necessity for strikes. You have never read where members of the International Association of Fire Fighters were on strike and I am sure you never will. [Applause.]

Back in 1936 our association expelled a local in Canada merely because the members took a vote on whether or not to strike.

The financial conditions of many municipalities and the arbitrary attitude of city officials in some cities have been the cause for some strikes among some public employees. Our members have had the same conditions to contend with and yet, out of loyalty to the public, they stayed on the job and worked long hours at low wages until changes took place in the city administration, or until financial conditions improved.

A few years ago, in a city in Texas, the city officials issued an ultimatum to all members of the fire department stating that they would be fired if they refused to withdraw from our organization. Our association withdrew the charter issued to the members rather than permit the city to remove the fire protection to which the citizens were entitled. I have often wondered who would be to blame if the city had dismissed every member of the fire department and left the citizens to the mercy of any fire that might occur.

Congress today is considering legislation which will regulate certain activities of labor organizations. No matter what action Congress may take, our members will never strike. Our association does not have to worry about any action Congress may take, as our members will not strike. Our organization activities have been above reproach. Our association has never had to employ organizers to go out among the members of the different fire departments to organize them into our association. The 14 vice presidents who are all members of fire departments, as well as the president and secretary-treasurer, act as our representatives to assist the city officials and members of the fire departments in solving the fire service problems of any city. The growth of the organization has been wholly the result of a desire on the part of the members of the fire service to unite their efforts in one organization representative of the fire service. Our organization has met that need as 65,000 members can testify.

The deliberation of this Conference can well point to the manner in which the United States Government, the State governments and all in the field of fire prevention and fire protection can best assist in providing an improved plan of fire prevention. The loss of life due to fire and the number of persons who are injured and crippled as a result of fire is sufficient reason for all to give serious consideration to finding a solution which will prevent its continuation.

The leaders in the fire prevention and firefighting field, together with members of each committee, have been working for several weeks in preparing for your consideration a number of reports. The reports as presented are, to say the least, only a step in the direction of solving the

problem. They represent a compilation of the latest thinking on the subject. Many of you probably will not agree with all the recommendations, or even the phraseology of the reports. As I said earlier, the problem is not new; for many years many organizations and many persons, both in the fire prevention and fire protection field, have done an excellent educational job. That they have not fully succeeded in preventing fires is only an indication of the stupendous task before this Conference. When President Truman invited you to be present, he believed you would contribute something constructive to the Conference. We are all here for the sole purpose of cooperating with the President in an attempt to reduce this unnecessary loss of life by fire. We have the brains, we have the technical skill, we have the practical knowledge and we have the will. On behalf of the firefighters of the Nation we pledge our continued loyalty and fidelity to our President in his efforts to reduce this tremendous loss of life as a result of fire.

Chairman Fleming. Thank you Mr. Richardson, for an excellent presentation.

The gentleman whom I will next introduce is an old schoolmate of mine at West Point, from which he graduated in 1914. I was a first classman when he was a little redheaded plebe. He has a long and distinguished military record. He served in France during the First World War and later was an instructor for a time at West Point. In February 1944, he became Chief of Staff, G-3 Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces, which all of us knew as SHAEF. He is now attached to the Office of the Secretary of War, engaged on problems of civilian defense.

He has been awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, the Oak Leaf Cluster to the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, the Silver Star Medal, the Bronze Medal, and has been decorated by numerous European governments.

It is my pleasure to introduce Maj. Gen. Harold R. Bull. [*Applause.*]

Maj. Gen. Harold R. Bull. Your invitation to participate in this Conference gives me an opportunity to express the War Department's appreciation of your purpose to improve the Nation's position in the solution of fire problems so vital to the national welfare and security in both peace and war.

I assume that I was asked to speak because of my recent membership on a special War Department board studying the important problems of civil defense. I shall discuss primarily that aspect of fire prevention. Organized fire prevention, of course, stands high in the demands for adequate solution. With the many eminent specialists in this group who have acquired personal knowledge by profound study of firefighting lessons of World War II, I am certain that you have full information of the terrifying possibilities for this country involved in the future use of fire as a weapon of war.

Let me first merely state what appear to me to be quite evident conclusions. I believe it is worth while to point them out, although I am sure that you realize them.

One. In World War II fire was probably the most devastating of all weapons.

Two. Development of new weapons will increase an enemy's capabilities for fire devastation many hundredfold to a point where paralysis of our own war-making capabilities is a possibility unless we develop and take counter measures.

Three. Entirely outside of any active counter measures of the armed forces to prevent or check such fire attacks on our big industrial centers, lies a vast field of civilian endeavor to mitigate the effects of such hostile attacks if delivered.

Four. The utter and sudden devastation of atomic attack, with many added hazards for the firefighters to cope with, will call for development of some new techniques, equipment, and types of training.

Five. Although there are many other aspects of future modern war against communities, many presenting entirely new problems to be solved by strong civilian defense machinery, one very old one but very much magnified in importance, is fire. Whether it be created by sabotage, incendiaries, conventional or atomic bombs, whether delivered in widespread or concentrated fashion, a terrific task faces us if we are to carry on.

Sixth. No stricken community will ever have adequate resources to meet the threat single-handed yet the local problem is basically a civilian problem demanding solution through strong local civilian organization guided and assisted by State and Federal Government agencies.

Seventh. It is evident that provision of the protection required to meet simultaneous devastating fire attacks on our crowded American communities will make the following demands on our individual citizens and on our various echelons of government:

1. Training of all individuals in the elimination of all of the many unnecessary fire hazards so well known to you, and in immediate-action methods of individual firefighting to suppress and control incipient fires. These missions will call for not only organized training but a disciplined citizenry.
2. Augmentation of local trained firefighting reserves.
3. Development of effective reciprocal or mutual aid arrangements in a manner certain to be effective in emergencies.
4. State support of their communities through emergency control of available mobile fire reserves within the States.
5. Federal emergency support with available means including necessary elements of the armed forces in aid of the civil powers in stricken communities in spite of such undesirable diversion of troops from their primary mission.
6. Standardization of certain fire equipment for flexible employment where the need develops.

Where does the Army come in in this scheme for fire prevention and fire protection in peace and war?

No doubt you are generally familiar with our deep interest in all phases of fire prevention and realize our accomplishments as a result of the "Army safety program" headed by a qualified

safety engineer now elevated to the staff of the Director of Personnel and Administration. The organization extends through each Army and each post and installation and, with your help, has been most effective in developing sound procedures. Also the Chief of Engineers carries the War Department responsibility for procurement of firefighting equipment and for the doctrine and training of Army firefighting units. Our contacts with the great civilian organizations in this field are close and continuous and, I'm sure, mutually helpful in both training and operation.

Outside of the humanitarian considerations in the Government's concern for the lives of its people, the War Department, with its responsibility for the mobilization of our vast industrial power, in cooperation with the Navy, is deeply concerned with any interruption in wartime industrial production and we recognize that "public enemy number one" in this respect may well be fire.

The War Department recognizes also its responsibility to respond in peace and war to appeals for help in situations beyond the civil authorities' ability to control and has under study now the procedures and training and equipment required to insure the prompt response in an emergency of the most readily available forces – Regular Army, National Guard, and Organized Reserves – to meet the additional demands for support of local civil organizations in the event of devastating hostile action by sabotage, bombs, incendiaries, or other weapons which may be used against us.

With this in mind I must say in conclusion that your Convention here in Washington is making not only a great contribution to community welfare and to conservation of our resources but in addition, in each forward step, is strengthening our national security.

Your action now in improving our peacetime fire prevention and firefighting capabilities is truly a great contribution to national defense, and speaking as a member of the Army, another fighting organization, I wish to pay tribute to and salute the courage and heroism and the public service of America's firefighters. [*Applause.*]

Chairman Fleming. Thanks you, General Bull, for a very thought-inspiring presentation.

Our pioneer ancestors thought of our virgin forest lands as an inexhaustible and therefore expendable resource and slashed and burned recklessly. We now know that our forest resources are neither inexhaustible nor expendable, and for a good many years increasing efforts have been made to conserve our remaining resources.

That fire prevention pays big dividends is indicated by the Government's forest-management policies. In 1945, which I am told was a fairly typical year, forest fire losses totaled nearly \$26,000,000. But here is an interesting thing. Some form of organized fire protection is provided for some 156,000,000 acres of forest lands, while 127,000,000 acres in State-owned or private tracts lack organized fire protection. The losses on the protected tracts were slightly over one-half of 1 percent, while the loss on smaller area of unprotected tracts was 11.64 percent.

The Chief of the Forest Service of the United States Department of Agriculture is a native of Iowa and a graduate of Iowa State College. He entered the United States Forest Service in 1913 and has made it his career.

It is the present fashion in some quarters to belittle the Government bureaucrats, who, as everybody is supposed to know, lies awake at night thinking up new schemes to squander the taxpayer's hard-earned money. I give you one bureaucrat whose efforts over the years have saved for us and our posterity untold millions.

Mr. Lyle F. Watts, Chief of the Forest Service. [*Applause.*]

Mr. Lyle F. Watts. General Fleming, ladies and gentlemen, we forest firefighters deeply appreciate the opportunity to present to this Conference some of the problems which we face. In calling this Conference the President specifically emphasized the urgent need for reducing the drain on our natural resources due to destructive forest fires.

One-third of our Nation's total land area, more than 650,000,000 acres, is forest land, and there are more millions of acres of brush and wild grassland that as range for domestic livestock make a major contribution to the Nation's supply of meat, wool, and leather. Much of all this forest and range land is also extremely important as watershed land. Over all of this huge area of forest and wild land fire is an annual and continuing menace.

This year our forests will be called on to yield us some 37 billion board feet of lumber for homes and other uses. They must yield some 20 million railroad cross-ties, 18 million cords of pulpwood for paper and plastics, 6 million poles for electric power and telephone lines, and a lot of other needed forest products.

We are using up in this country our saw-timber supplies, our biggest and best trees, half again as fast as they are being replaced by growth. It is of the utmost importance, then, that we do not still further upset the balance between growth and drain by inexcusable loss from forest fires, just as important as protecting the forests as a source of water and a regulator of stream flow. Municipal water supplies, hydroelectric developments, and irrigation farming are dependent on forest and wild land for their watersheds. Elimination of fires on watersheds is the basic step in reducing the menace of floods.

Then, too, the forests harbor a large part of our wildlife resources. The recreational values of the forests not only contribute to our physical and spiritual health, but they are of economic importance as the basis of a very sizable industry serving recreation and vacation needs. All of these values are constantly menaced by forest fires.

The direct danger from forest fires runs into many millions of dollars annually. In 1946 fires destroyed enough timber to build 215,000 five-room houses. They destroyed homes, farm buildings, and crops, mills, and other improvements. Ten lives were lost fighting forest fires in 1946.

To these direct losses must be added the vast intangible losses resulting from such things as the decay or deterioration of fire damaged timber, the replacement of desirable tree species by less valuable ones, soil deterioration and erosion, uncertain streamflow and flood damage resulting from fire, the destruction of game and valuable range, loss of scenic value, interruption of travel and of tourist business, and the disruption of industry and employment.

Though difficult to measure in dollars, these indirect losses are by no means theoretical. Los Angeles County in California had an excellent example a few years ago where cause and effect were as graphically apparent as if drawn out on a chart. On New Year's Day 1934 a flood ripped out of Pickens' Canyon destroying 400 homes in the town of Montrose, causing \$5,000,000 in damage, and taking 34 lives. A month or so earlier a forest and brush fire had burned over the watershed above the canyon. Heavy rains occurred over that whole general region, but it was from the few hundred acres of burned watershed above Pickens' Canyon, and only from that burned watershed, that damaging flood waters emerged.

Preventing and suppressing forest fires present their own peculiar problems. Forest fires are mostly outside the sphere of activity of city and municipal fire departments. The problems of time and distance to be overcome in forest country are much greater than in thickly populated areas. The values involved are generally without benefit of fire insurance.

Often, too, the damage amounts to a far greater loss in public values than in financial loss to the immediate owner. The Los Angeles County story I cited a moment ago is a case in point. The brush and chaparral consumed by that particular fire had little or no cash value of itself, but the flood damage resulting from that fire ran into the millions, and from that example we can readily see why it is often as important to protect brush or a scrubby growth from a fire as it is to protect mature timber. The brush or chaparral that many people call worthless may be worth many dollars per acre as watershed cover.

Systematic forest fire control began in this country about 40 years ago in national forests under administration of the United States Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture. It was for the most part a new endeavor, and focused first on the heroic task of controlling fires in the backcountry of the West. From that beginning it has advanced rapidly, until it has become a highly specialized undertaking in many sections and is steadily increasing in efficiency.

At about the same time, private timberland owners began to band together in timber protective associations. In 1911 the first real impetus to protection of State and private land came about through the Weeks law. It recognized the public stake in controlling fires and provided Federal funds to reinforce the efforts of States and private owners. In 1924 the Clark-McNary law greatly enlarged and liberalized these provisions. Under these acts the area of privately owned forest land protection has increased from 61,000,000 acres in 1911 to 319,000,000 acres in 1946. But there are still 120,000,000 acres of privately owned forest lands that as yet received no organized fire protection, and in many places the protection already in force needs greatly to be strengthened.

Responsibility for forest fire protection is now actively assumed by Federal, State, and private agencies. The United States Forest Service protects the largest area of Federal forest land, some 185,000,000 acres, but several other Federal agencies also have a highly important job in protecting wild lands. The National Park Service, the Indian Service; the Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service; and the Bureau of Reclamation in the Interior Department all have large areas of public land to protect. The Soil Conservation Service and the TVA both cooperate in protection work. Even the Army and the Navy have a very sizable forest fire protection job on military reservations.

In 43 States organized protection on non-Federal forest land is a primary job of the State forestry department. Under the Clark-McNary law a total of \$23,000,000 is budgeted for expenditure this year on cooperative protection for State and privately owned forest lands. Of this sum, the States are contributing 55 percent, the Federal Government 35 percent, the private landowner 10 percent.

Around 175,000 forest fires occur each year in the United States, of which only 10 percent are caused by lightning, leaving 90 percent caused by man and, therefore, preventable. The human hazard has more than doubled since the war. People are vacation hungry, and they do constitute a fire risk when they go out in the woods.

Perhaps that applies to some of us, too, you know. We are making impressive progress in the methods of fighting growing forest fires, but it will be far better and cheaper in the long run if we can cut down the huge waste and destruction from careless American habits by checking man-caused forest fires at their source.

This calls for an aggressive, continuing campaign of education. We have under way a Nationwide cooperative forest fire prevention campaign in which the American Red Cross, the Advertising Council, Inc., and many organizations and individuals are cooperating with Federal and State foresters. There are also effective "Keep America Green" programs under way in 20 States. Such education programs need wider sponsorship and need to reach more segments of the American public.

We need more work in the schools. We need to instruct farmers in the care of burning old fields and brush, woods workers and sportsmen on fire safety in the woods. We need to teach millions of smokers how to handle their cigarettes and matches like responsible, grown-up individuals. Our educational work must be coupled, and is, with law enforcement and with State restrictions, excluding the public from highly hazardous areas during periods of unusual fire danger. In general, the State fire laws are reasonably adequate, but in many States enforcement is weak, particularly in the case of laws applying to incendiaries.

Equally important with fire prevention and law enforcement is strengthening of the forces and facilities to combat fires that do start. Organized protection should be extended as quickly as possible to the 120,000,000 acres not now so protected. Existing Federal, State, and private forest fire protection agencies, local, town, and municipal fire departments, should be better coordinated.

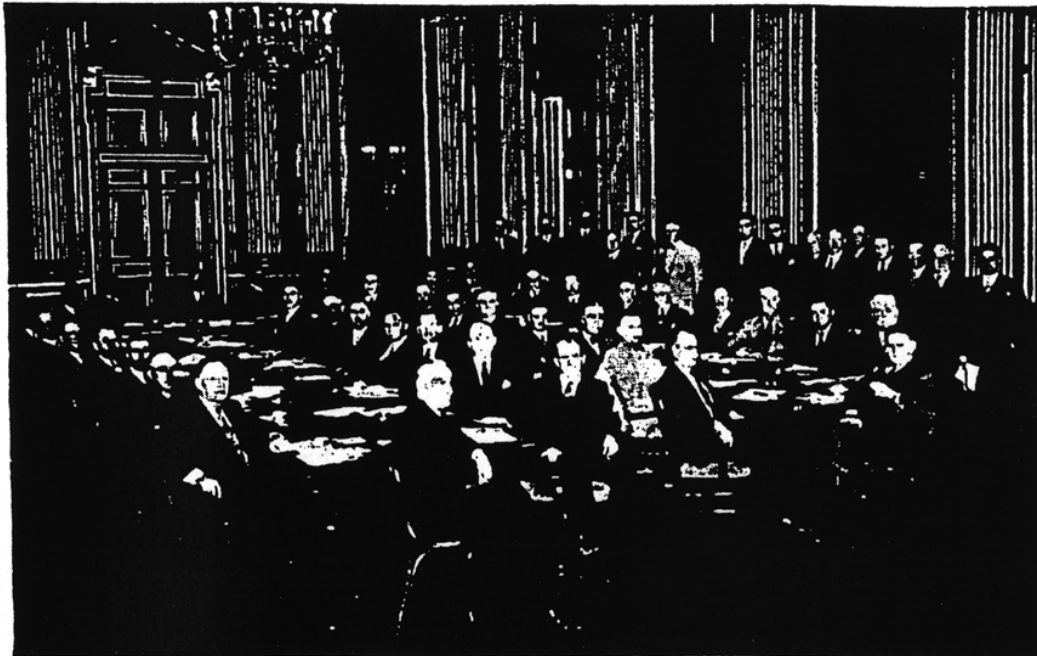
A logical development is the expansion of forest protection into this whole field of rural fire control. In some places this has already been done. There should be continued study and development of forest firefighting equipment, studies of fire weather, research in fire prevention, and in suppression techniques.

Forest fire protection has now developed to the state in many places where, in my opinion, insurance on standing timber is entirely feasible. In order to attain these objectives we must have a better understanding and appreciation on the part of the public of the great importance of our forest and wild land resources - what their protection and wise use mean to the individual in the

way of cheaper lumber, better hunting and fishing, and recreation – what they mean to the Nation in safeguarding water supply, regulated streamflow, steady yield of basic raw materials for industry and employment. If and when every American citizen comes to know how much our forests mean to national welfare and prosperity, we shall have very few man-caused forest fires. I think this Conference might well consider this matter and take the initiative toward making forest insurance a reality. I am asking this Conference to give serious consideration to the Nation's forest fire problem and in its findings and recommendations to give full support to measures which will help reduce the enormous damage and loss caused every year by the red demon of the woods. The Federal, State, and private forest protection agencies, I know, will cooperate to the fullest in effectuating the President's program for fire protection. Thank you. [Applause.]

Chairman Fleming. Thank you, Mr. Watts. The last four addresses have most appropriately led up to the report of the Committee on Firefighting Services. Gen. William J. Donovan, who was chairman of this committee and who worked unceasingly with the committee and was here the early part of this week, is unable to be here today to give the committee report, so I am asking Horatio Bond to pinch-hit for him. Mr. Bond. [Applause.]

Mr. Horatio Bond (National Fire Protection Association). I am sure that General Donovan is sorry not to be here today, and I am personally disappointed that he is not here to present this report to you. I have greatly enjoyed working with him on this job. I have special affection for him because he was one of the first of the topside military people to accept the importance of the role which fire could play in the war. He helped us get certain technical specialists at a time when they were badly needed, and he sensed, I think, very early fire destruction might be one of the pressures through which victory could be brought about.



COMMITTEE ON FIRE-FIGHTING SERVICES

What those pressures are is perhaps illustrated by this Conference. A few disastrous fires in this country during the past year, the LaSalle and Winecoff Hotel fires, for example, and a number of others, have prompted the President of the United States to ask some 2,000 distinguished citizens of the country, who are able to help deal with fires, to come to Washington for the better part of a week to think about what might be done.

It was true that the pressures of fire damage did bring victory. As General Bull has indicated, fire is not only a peacetime but a wartime problem. The destruction by fire of Hamburg, Germany, in the summer of 1943 by Royal Air Forces very nearly knocked Hitler out of the war at that time.

In his address this morning Mr. Bugbee mentioned that a fire which has been prevented is not spectacular. I know that it cannot compete as a spectacle with the picture I have of a fire here in Washington just a few years ago. The fire was in Hahn's Shoe Store, and the pictures showed it enveloped in smoke. Four high pressure hose streams from aerial ladders are shown in the pictures; another from a water tower; four or five more from deck guns; and probably many others, that did not show in the pictures, from hand lines inside the buildings. These plus an array of apparatus, hose lines like spaghetti in the street, 300 firemen at work on a five-alarm fire, produced a real spectacle.

In presenting this report of the Firefighting Services Committee I am making these remarks simply to draw a few lines of perspective.

Nearly all of the current large fires are those involving a single property and, therefore, are not conflagration in the sense of a sweeping fire. There have been some forest conflagrations and waterfront conflagrations, but the day of the great sweeping fire involving dozens or hundreds of buildings in our city areas, is largely past. It has been about 25 years since we have had a conflagration of the sort involving a loss of as much as \$10,000,000, and no conflagration to match those of Chicago in 1871, Boston in 1872, Baltimore in 1904, or San Francisco in 1906.

It is proper to mention these, because the greatly reduced chance of conflagrations is due to the development of our municipal fire and water departments. Improvements in building construction, especially the general exclusion of wood-shingle roofings, of course, has helped reduce the chance of conflagration, but I am addressing these observations to the effect of the improvements in firefighting facilities.

Estimates of fire losses available to us are expressed in dollars, and you do not need me to tell you that the dollar today is not what it was even 5 years ago. In dollars the 1946 estimated loss was about the same as that of 1926. In terms of relative destruction the 1946 loss is only about 77 percent of that of 1926. The estimated losses in 1946 increased in dollars 16 percent over the previous year. In terms of relative destruction this increase was less than 5 percent.

A better picture of the spectacular progress which we have made against first comes from a consideration of the amount destroyed in comparison to the total amount of property there is to burn. The amount of property which could burn has greatly increased since 1926, yet even the distorted dollar values show that we are burning, currently, a little less than then. The amount

this year will be only a fraction of the total which might burn. Add in your mind to the normal increase in building since 1926 the huge expansion of the war years, and you can see the extent of the accomplishment.

There is more and more to burn every year, yet less and less of it is burning.

The report before you has been prepared on the basis of ideas supplied by members of the committee. These were developed at meetings of four working subcommittees early in April. A meeting of the full committee was held on April 14, and following that meeting the draft which has been circulated here at the Conference was prepared. It was reviewed yesterday at a very fully attended meeting and was given extended discussion. The numerous items in the action program in the report were approved. At the same time a number of changes were made which will appear in the published report. Practically all of these were of an editorial character, none of which change any fundamental parts of the program recommended.

Mr. Chairman, I move the acceptance of the report by the Conference and the approval of the Action Program for the Firefighting Services as presented in the report. [*Applause.*]

Chairman Fleming. Thank you, Mr. Bond. You have all had copies of the report. Mr. Bond has explained to you the very slight changes in it, except some editorial work. Is there any second to this motion?

{The motion was seconded by Mr. Frank McAuliffe, was put to a vote, and was unanimously approved.}

Chairman Fleming. The American Red Cross is the one organization to which we all turn in time of disaster. After the devastating tornadoes that swept portions of Texas, Arkansas, and Missouri this spring and at the Texas City calamity in April, it was the Red Cross that was first on the scene to hold out a helping hand to the afflicted. In reality that was the helping hand of all the American people, for the Red Cross is a democratic organization supported by all the people and serving all the people in time of need.

The executive vice chairman of the Red Cross is a native of Boston and has a distinguished record in social work. Principally, however, he has made the Red Cross service his career, and it was he who handled the negotiations that brought the Red Cross into Holland to succor the afflicted at the German invasion of 1939.

Mr. James T. Nicholson. [*Applause.*]

Mr. James T. Nicholson. Mr. Chairman, ladies, and gentlemen, the dean of a well-known women's college, realizing that he could not do anything about the smoking on the part of the girls, addressed them one morning and said, "I am not going to sermonize or moralize about smoking, but I want to tell you that you neither smoke as ladies or gentlemen," and I suspect that in what he said a lot could be made to apply to most of us.

It happens that my father was a firefighter in a volunteer fire department many years ago. He took his job very seriously, and he instilled in me certain habits with respect to fire prevention that still control certain of my actions. I paid the penalty somewhat the other day, because just after a 15-cent shine, as habit, I threw my butt onto the sidewalk and then proceeded to step on it and grind it out, only to find that I had stepped into a mud puddle. But my discomfiture was not as great as the experienced from the glares of the butt snipers in Frankfurt a year ago with General Bull and in Cairo, Egypt, particularly.

I am indeed glad to bring you a message from the American National Red Cross and to assure you of wholehearted Red Cross support in the Nationwide fight to prevent destruction of lives and property by fire.

Many may not realize it but, from its inception, the American Red Cross has been a fighter for the prevention of fires and of fire hazards and with considerable cause. Sixty-six years ago, in 1881, the newly organized American Red Cross numbering only 250 members answered its first disaster call – a call to take help to homeless sufferers in the great forest fires that were sweeping Michigan. Word came to the small Red Cross group that thousands were fleeing before the flames; that many were dying in the ashes of their hard-earned homes.

That was the first test – a test by fire – of the ingenuity and purpose inherent in the hearts of those first American Red Cross disaster workers. Sixty-six years ago, communications and transportation, as I need not point out, were not as fast as they are today – yet many boxes of supplies, nearly \$4,000 in cash, as well as volunteer help was rushed to the Michigan area.

That was the organization's baptism in disaster work.

In the past 10 years we have given help in rehabilitation and disaster occurring on an average of one every 2 days. And ever since that time, it has been a major Red Cross responsibility to relieve the human suffering and misery caused by fires – and, through educational prevention programs, to help reduce the number of fires.

The Red Cross congressional charter states – and I'd like to quote – that we must “continue and carry on a system of national and international relief in time of peace and apply the same in mitigating the suffering caused by pestilence, famine, fire, floods, and other great national calamities and to devise and carry on measures for the prevention of the same.” And I would emphasize the last phrase. I can think of no gathering where the question as to what the Red Cross actually does about fire prevention could be better asked – and answered – than at this Conference.

First, because nearly 9 million Americans have completed Red Cross accident-prevention and first-aid courses within the past 7 years. Take first-aid courses, for example. We cannot teach how to treat a burn without giving counsel about preventing fires, the cause of so many fires, getting out of burning buildings, and turning in alarms. We cannot teach accident prevention without giving information about common fire hazards and how to eradicate them.

A major part of all Red Cross accident-prevention courses is devoted to reducing the hazards of fires in homes and on farms. Red Cross training objectives in this field – and again I quote – are “to focus upon individual responsibility in the prevention of fires and the elimination of fire hazards – and also to acquaint students fully with the programs of fire prevention as conducted by the state and local communities.”

American Red Cross workers, serving at 581 major fires throughout the United States during the past 7 years, saw again and again the enormous toll of life and property which occurs year after year. Many of these workers are still on the scene of the Texas City explosion and fire; others are in the Texas-Oklahoma Panhandle areas where fire followed tornado. Last year Red Cross men and women served at the Winecoff, LaSalle, and other hotel conflagrations which took more than 270 lives.

Yes, your Red Cross sees at first hand the dire need of greater fire prevention education.

And now – secondly – because the Red Cross works directly with the United States Forestry and the United States Weather Bureau in fire prevention, fire spotting, and disaster preparedness. Early in 1945, special forest fire prevention committees were set up by Red Cross in each of its five area offices. Through its network of 3,754 chapters, the Red Cross has helped circulate films, posters, pamphlets, cartoons, radio skits, and other attention-compelling publicity to schools, libraries, filling stations, lumber companies, railroads, and hotels.

My third and possibly most important point – deals with Red Cross fire prevention work among 19,000,000 young Americans – members of the American Junior Red Cross.

There is where our greatest hope for the future lies. This year seven area training centers, established in cooperation with the United States Forest Service, have enrolled hundreds of Junior Red Cross members in the States of California, Washington, Minnesota, Arkansas, Montana, Virginia, and Georgia. As an important part of these programs for leadership training, veteran forest rangers have presented films and lectures, and have taken the Junior Red Cross fire prevention trainees on field trips. The practical phases of these on-the-ground fire prevention courses have occupied from 3 to 10 hours for each Junior Red Cross member.

This type of Red Cross fire prevention work is, I believe, concrete and well defined. Similar programs are under way in many of our chapters. In Spokane, Wash., for example, several hundred Junior Red Cross members recently went on duty at all filling stations throughout the city. These young people were not pumping gasoline or filling car radiators or wiping off windows. They were performing a simple, courteous service in emptying automobile ash trays, so that the ash trays could be used without possible danger by car occupant. As you well know, cigarettes tossed carelessly from car windows have many times caused tremendous brush and forest fires. As each ash tray was emptied, a small sticker was attached to it, reading: “Use the Ash Tray – Prevent Forest Fires.”

Again – this time in Salt Lake City – all boys and girls belonging to the Junior Red Cross pledged themselves to act as voluntary fire spotters for the city fire department and for the United States Forest Service. Numerous instances have already been quoted in official reports

showing that alarms turned in by these young people prevented potentially large fires from gaining headway.

Many other Red Cross chapters and Junior Red Cross groups could be cited for their practical, down-to-earth programs of fire prevention. Their projects may vary in some degree, according to locality, but the same over-all purpose inspires each of them.

And that, at least in part, is what the American National red Cross is doing in this Nationwide campaign for increased fire prevention education.

We are pleased that President Truman has asked the Red Cross to participate in this great conference. We are delighted to be an active partner with all of you and with other national and community groups who are striving toward a common goal. Working together, I'm sure we can achieve a safer America – a more alert America, constantly on guard against the needless loss of life and property from preventable fires. [*Applause.*]

Chairman Fleming. Thank you, Mr. Nicholson.

The next speaker is a gentleman who has developed such a distaste for fire in any shape or form that I am told he even eats his food raw. [*Laughter.*] A fire anywhere in the United States is certain to cause him acute distress.

I have the honor of presenting, not introducing, Mr. W. E. Mallalieu, general manager of the National Board of Fire Underwriters. Mr. Mallalieu needs no introduction to any audience interested in fire prevention. [*Applause.*]

Mr. W. E. Mallalieu (general manager, the National Board of Underwriters). General Fleming, ladies and gentlemen, as I think of the inspiring and challenging address President Truman delivered from this platform yesterday, filled with sincerity and sympathetic understanding of the problems of this Conference, and as I think of the addresses and papers presented here, the main thought in my mind is: What an opportunity we have to make our America a better and safer place in which to live! [*Applause.*]

Fire waste in the United States constitutes a problem of paramount and far reaching importance. It vitally affects the economic future of the Nation.

During the 81 years since the National Board of Fire Underwriters was founded it has fought a relentless battle against fire.

From a small beginning the fire loss has increased almost annually despite the combined efforts of many companies and organizations to arrest it. During that time many cities have been almost burned out. The tragedies of Chicago, San Francisco, Atlanta, Chelsea, and scores of others have kept the sky red with the glow of conflagration.

Over the past half century we have made great technological progress in fire prevention. The principles involved in eradicating the conditions that breed fires and in preventing the spread of

flame and toxic gases are well known. We have worked out safe methods of handling and storing a vast number of highly flammable and explosive products. We have devised measures which make hazardous industrial processes relatively safe to human life.

Yet in the past few years we have seen the fire loss growing. We have seen the numbers of fires increase steadily until, a survey conducted by this Conference tells us, they now average more than 800,000 fires per year in the United States. Our dollar fire loss is at an all-time high.

However, compared with the amount of property at risk and the increased wealth of the country we have undoubtedly made substantial progress in protecting our Nation from fire.

And who can say how much greater devastation would have been visited upon our cities or what the cost would be in human life, if we had not developed sound principles of fire prevention?

Yes, we've made great progress. Progress that can be measured and counted in the tens of thousands of lives saved, and hundreds of millions, perhaps, billions of dollars worth of property preserved to serve the Nation and the world.

But this progress is not enough. We still burn too much and destroy too many lives.

If history repeats itself – should the upward trend of fire losses follow a curve similar to the experience after World War I and continue to rise for nine consecutive years, we will soon be confronted with billion-dollar losses instead of half or three-quarter billion-dollar destruction.

At the present rate of increase, fire losses for 1947 will hit three-quarters of a billion dollars. Projecting the same rate of increase into the future, the shocking figure of \$1,000,000,000 will be reached by 1950 – just 5 years after the conclusion of World War II, as compared to 8 years after the termination of World War I when the greatest fire loss of that period occurred.

To me it is unbelievable that we have allowed this situation to exist or that we will tolerate its continuance without mobilizing all the talent and ingenuity, energy and resources this great country possesses.

Rightfully we have always prided ourselves upon our American spirit of accomplishment – our will and our ability to get things done. Our people have wrested a great Nation from the wilds of an untamed continent. We have built upon an economic system of free enterprise, based on individual initiative, which has achieved a productivity and resulted in a standard of living which is the envy of the rest of the world.

We have succeeded in solving, or at least mitigating, most our great social problems such as contagious disease, sanitation, and crime, by the effective application of the developments of science and technology. But each year we continue to sacrifice to fire thousands of lives – innocent men, women and most tragic of all, children – burned to death or maimed and cripple for life. We have permitted and continue to permit the wanton, profligate destruction of billions of dollars in irreplaceable natural and created wealth.

For years we have endeavored to meet this problem by general education and by the adoption of restrictive fire codes, but today it is apparent that nothing but the whole hearted cooperation of all interests in our national life can control the loss of life and property due to fire. Reviewing the tragic years that are past, we look hopefully into the future. We have gone far. We have accomplished splendid results in the education of our people to the hazards which are developing in everyday life. With the help of specialists and the cooperation of different interested organizations we have been able to solve many of the critical fire conditions introduced into modern society. Safety standards and regulations have been developed and in many cities have been accepted which have proven of lasting value. Building codes have been adopted – but the best building code in the world depends entirely on proper enforcement.

Let me direct your attention for just a moment to what has been accomplished in other fields. These are achievements which should be an incentive and a spur to us to strive to do as much in fire safety.

According to statistics compiled by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co., diphtheria took a toll of 125 lives per 100,000 population in 1885 while in 1945 this death rate had been reduced to 1.2 per 100,000.

In 1885 typhoid accounted for 50 deaths per 100,000 population while in 1945 deaths from that great killer had been practically wiped out – reduced to a mere 0.4 deaths per 100,000.

Even against our greatest killer, tuberculosis, we have made remarkable progress. In 1885 approximately 200 died of this disease out of each 100,000 population while in 1945 this rate was only one-fifth of that frightful toll – 40.1 deaths per 100,000.

How have those miraculous results been accomplished? Simply because as a people we recognized the hazards which faced us and were willing to pay the price – in money, in effort and in perseverance, to make the unrelenting fight necessary to bring them under control. We applied the latest scientific and technical knowledge to the problems. We took the preventive measures necessary to eliminate or control the breeding places of the germs responsible for those diseases. We enforced protective measures to safeguard our people against these scourges.

Why can't we as a Nation attack the fire menace with the same spirit of determination? Why can't all of us – Nation, State, and municipalities – work together, using every resource at our command to take those corrective measures which are necessary to control fire hazards? Why can't we apply to this great problem the wealth of knowledge, experience and scientific information available?

The great price which we are paying each year in innocent lives and irreplaceable wealth demands that we do so – now!

In calling together this Conference, President Truman has shown the initiative and leadership essential to the approach to this problem on a truly national scale. I regard this President's Conference as perhaps the most significant event in our country's long fight against fire menace. It will enlist great new forces in the fight against preventable destruction. With the more

general acceptance by public officials of responsibility for fire safety in their respective jurisdiction, the promise of greater progress in the future seems assured.

We are facing an era of constantly growing fire hazards brought about by the discovery and widespread use of new and increasingly hazardous chemical compounds. The Texas City disaster on the very eve of this Conference has highlighted the problems of the future. We must speed up our research. We must apply the latest scientific knowledge and technological developments to the conquest of fire in the same manner that scientific tools were used in our victory over contagious diseases. We must attack the fire problem on every front with the same determination that characterized those campaigns against disease.

The organization which I have the honor to represent has been engaged in the fight against fire for over three quarters of a century. I pledge to this Conference that we will not only continue that fight in the days ahead but will intensify our efforts. We will do all that is within our power to help to make effective the recommendations which are promulgated by this Conference. The true success of our effort, however, will depend not alone upon the trained men leading our fire departments and the intelligent efforts of our public officials in the States and municipalities, but upon the fire consciousness of the general public. To all of them I now appeal. The opportunity, ladies and gentlemen, is yours! What an opportunity! [*Applause.*]

General Fleming. Thank you very much indeed, Mr. Mallalieu. That was really most inspiring.

It would be surprising if with some 10,000 lives being sacrificed to fire each year in the United States the life insurance companies did not feel that they also had a very considerable interest in fire prevention. I imagine the life insurance people would be quite happy if all of us could just keep on living forever. Unhappily, that does not yet seem to be quite possible, although within a generation the average life span has been almost miraculously increased. A boy baby today can expect to live to an age of 62 at least, while a girl baby may look forward to more than 67 years on this mortal soil. Maybe the girls are tougher. They can expect to live that long barring automobile accidents and fires.

The accidents that have the growth of mechanization have replaced as outstanding killers a number of diseases once considered fatal. For a decade or more we have been losing ground in our battle against fire. That is curious when you come to think of the extreme difficulty of controlling disease compared with the relative ease with which fires can be prevented if we only set ourselves to the task.

It is my privilege to introduce Mr. O. J. Arnold, an old friend of mine from Minneapolis, president of the Northwestern National Life Insurance Co., who has long been a leader in insurance association work. Mr. Arnold. [*Applause.*]

O. J. Arnold. As others here have pointed out, the recent holocaust at Texas City provides a grim backdrop for this Conference. At the same time it dramatically points up the need for an all-out attack on the disastrous fire toll for which this meeting is the kick-off. When we review the appalling costs of this conflagration, we may even agree with the unknown ancient who first said "It is later than you think." Had such a Conference as this been held a year ago, and had it

perchance prevented the spark which set Texas City aflame, what a contribution that would have been to the well-being and happiness of the American people!

Such a contribution would not have been measured wholly by the property losses which would have been avoided had there been no catastrophe. Nor would it have been measured by the indemnity for the human lives lost, whatever that figure may prove to be when the life insurance payment figures are finally available. Far more important than the immediate economic costs of any disaster, huge as they are, are the personal losses to the families of the dead and the continuing loss to our society of the contributions they would have made in their life's work. Who can say what these Texas City losses will eventually add up to? There may have been among the fatalities a scientist who would have found the cure for cancer, a potential statesman whose leadership would have hastened harmony and understanding among all the nations, a musician destined to write the modern folk songs of America. There must have been, among the dead, men who would have produced children with qualities of mind and spirit which the nation urgently needs. These are the irreplaceable values – human lives as well as economic values – which are snuffed out in the flame and gases over Texas City. These are the more important of the values we seek to conserve in the program launched here.

We in the life insurance business believe that any business holding the important place which life insurance does in the national economy has a responsibility to promote the welfare of the people as a whole, as well as of its policyholders. We believe that is good business as well as good citizenship. And speaking for the life insurance companies, I do not hesitate to say that keen as our interest is in conserving life in order to reduce mortality rates, our business as a whole is aware, too, of these human values and of the long-range contribution they make to the general welfare. Because of these human values, the desire of the life insurance business to have this Conference point the way to conservation of life through fire prevention is deepened and strengthened.

The human race has, from early tribal days, attacked its worse scourges by calling a council of war and planning a full-scale attack. That is why this Conference gives encouraging promise of real accomplishment. Intelligent thought and planning lie behind this meeting. I take personal satisfaction in the fact that your Chairman, General Fleming, to whom much credit must go, is an old acquaintance of mine, dating back to the years when he headed the upper Mississippi River development project which has meant so much to those of us who live in that area. General Fleming, in his public expression on the subject of fire prevention, has emphasized the three E's – Education, Enforcement, and Engineering – as the keys to the problem, and he wisely puts education first. That is where, in my opinion, the best chances for success lie in combating the fire menace.

Perhaps many of you noted the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.'s survey of catastrophic accidents over the past 10 years, released by grim coincidence on the very day of the Texas City explosion. That survey concludes that almost 90 percent of all catastrophic accidents, and more than three-fourths of the resulting deaths, are the result not of natural disasters but of human failures.

Human failures – carelessness, if you will – lie at the bottom of most fire tragedies. Surely that is apparent on every hand. And carelessness will yield only to education – persistent, persuasive education as to what causes fires and how appalling can be the consequences of failure to observe preventive measures. Only when the people as a whole appreciate these facts will we get really effective action on a broad scale.

Over the years I have found that people will do the things they should do, if they understand they are desirable for them and for the public good. They will get vaccinated against smallpox – and deaths from smallpox have been reduced to an almost negligible figure. They will contribute generously to worthy causes such as the fight against heart disease, cancer, and polio – yet polio, for example, even in an epidemic year, claims only a fraction of the deaths which fire claim. They will take preventive health measures. In my own city of Minneapolis, we are this very week launching a community-wide program in cooperation with the Federal Government, to X-ray the chest of every adult in the city, in order to disclose signs of tuberculosis and other chest ailments such as enlarged hearts and cancer. We may not achieve this goal 100 percent, but the public reaction to the idea of taking a dramatic step toward making Minneapolis the healthiest city in the country is phenomenally good. Six months ago I would have been extremely skeptical – now I am confident this ambitious goal is attainable. Yes, people will respond to intelligent programs of education.

Finally, I present my one and only recommendation to the members of this Conference. It is this: that we add a fourth “E” to General Fleming’s three E’s – Education, Enforcement, and Engineering. The fourth E is Example. Each of us in this auditorium is present because he or she has some special responsibility in the war against fire disaster. Each of us has some influence in our community. If each of us will, when we get back home, provide an example for our fellow citizens by practicing the commonsense rules which we all know will reduce the local fire toll, we will be using one of the most effective tools of education. If we are fire prevention conscious, and let that fact be known by our example, others soon will be. If we are not, how can we expect others to be? If we start with ourselves, we shall have taken the first small but necessary step toward our long-range goal.

Chairman Fleming. Thank you, Mr. Arnold. I want to say that I am all for that last “E” the fourth one. I hope you will all take that back with you.

I am told that the Committee on Research has its report ready, and to present the report I call on Mr. Woodward H. Brenton, Chairman of the committee. Mr. Brenton. [*Applause.*]

Mr. Woodward H. Brenton. Mr. Chairman and members of the Conference, to make my position perfectly clear, I want you to know that I stand before you merely as spokesman for a group of very able men who have been serving as members of this Committee on Research. As a layman, I want to tell you about how greatly I appreciate watching these men work and seeing their skill and ability on this subject and, more than that, observing their seriousness in trying to solve this important problem. Right now I want to thank those men, especially Mr. Alvah Small, for the heavy burden he has carried in connection with this committee as secretary of the committee.

You have all seen the report of the committee, which was prepared after a number of conferences and was made available. Yesterday afternoon the committee had a 4-hour session. A number of changes were made in the report, but for the most part they had to do with clarifying it and making more complete the original intention of the members of the committee. There are four major matters which I feel, however, should be called to your attention before presenting the report.

In the first section of the draft which was made available to you, in the recommendation of a central place for availability of information for fire prevention, the word "authority" was used. Since there was no intention toward the establishment of any authority, the wording of this section has been changed.

The second matter I wish to call to your attention is in the section dealing with the treatment of habitual fire setters. The wording was changed to give due respect to the rights of the individual.



COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH

In the section on Navy firefighter schools it was first recommended that the Navy firefighter schools be made available. Since this original recommendation was made, the Navy has announced its willingness to make these schools available; therefore, the wording of this section was changed.

The one addition that was made to this report is an additional section. I will read the conclusions of that section contained in one sentence:

The Committee on Research believes it appropriate to recommend to the Conference that it go on record asserting its support and endorsement of National-State-local government and civilian programs for fire prevention.

Mr. Chairman, I want to recommend and move the adoption of this report of the Committee on research. [Applause.]

Chairman Fleming. Thank you very much, sir.

Mr. Walter Williams (Seattle, Wash.). I second the motion.

Chairman Fleming. We are happy to have in the audience today Mr. S. H. Ingberg, Chief of the Fire Resistance Section of the National Bureau of Standards, who tells me he would like to comment briefly on the report of this committee. Will Mr. Ingberg please come up on the stage so that he can speak into the microphone and be heard by all of us? He is a very distinguished man in this particular line. We are very happy to have him here. [Applause.]

Mr. S. H. Ingberg. Far from being distinguished, I feel very humble, particularly in this company. I have spent some years in fire-loss prevention, and I really have not felt that I made more than a very, very feeble start.

One of the objects and outcome of research in fire loss prevention should be establishment of its more important fundamentals on a broad and secure basis. These cannot be said to be as well developed or established as those for structural, mechanical, electrical, and safety engineering. While acknowledging the greater complexity of conditions that affect the fire loss, it should be possible to make more effective use of the loss experience in establishing basis of evaluation of hazards for given conditions and the application of appropriate protection measures.

The outlay required for protection should be proportionate to the reduction in the fire loss that can be achieved thereby. Where life loss is not involved, it is questionable whether it should exceed the expected saving. Even where protection of life, as well as property, is a consideration, an evaluation on the above basis will give significant information.

The annual cost of loss prevention measures can in general be taken as the sum of recurring items, such as fire inspection, fire brigade, and watchman service, plus a percentage of the initial cost of fire protection equipment, the latter to cover interest on the investment, depreciation, and maintenance. In arriving at estimates of possible reduction in fire losses for given outlays, due account must be taken of the degree of effectiveness of the measures provided, and an outlay for given measures equal to the expected loss for the unprotected condition is justified on the basis of saving of property only, if such measures, as judged by the experience record, will reduce the loss to a comparatively small percentage thereof.

Considerations such as the above should assist materially in the application of rational analysis to the evaluation of specific conditions from the standpoint of hazard and required protection. Possibly, as an outcome of further study, a case book might be developed, listing on one side the factors having a bearing on the hazard, such as construction, occupancy, and public protection,

and on the other, the more applicable protection measures. If of sufficient range and suitability arranged and indexed, such a compilation might prove very helpful in the initial appraisal of given conditions.

An approach such as the above should assist in preventing the proposal of a miscellany of measures on the chance that some of them may be effective. It would also be helpful in offsetting the tendency to indicate a too limited range in protection measures, where others might equally or better apply. The essential difference between fire protection engineering and promotion of the various devices and services by which it is in part implemented is the ability to truly appraise the hazard and recommend the most economical and effective measures for the conditions presented.

It should be recognized that a high degree of protection is attainable with a combination of conditions or measures, none of which by itself may rate as of highest effectiveness. In this connection I will cite the fire loss record of the Government building plant for Washington and vicinity. The value of buildings and contents subject to fire loss, not including any valuation on records, is near \$1,000,000,000. The average annual fire loss for the past 15 or 20 years has been less than \$10,000. This gives an annual loss rate of no more than 1 cent per \$1,000 of value exposed. This compares with a national average of the order of \$2 and, for the better improved risks, of 20 cents per \$1,000.

The construction is superior for nearly all buildings but for some of the leased properties. The occupancy conditions present a general range from light to medium fire hazard, with only relatively small areas of high hazard. Inspections for fire hazard are made more or less regularly but, otherwise, there is no central control of occupancy conditions. Incombustible furniture and filing equipment are used to a considerable extent, but some areas present a considerable fire hazard from record storage in combustible shelving. Standpipes, hand extinguishers, and watchman service are provided for nearly the whole property. Automatic Sprinkler and automatic alarm equipment cover less than 1 percent of the total. While the property with very little protection might not be considered a bad insurance risk, with what is provided it quite apparently represents an extraordinarily good one.

The above is presented only as an example of the possibilities of fire control by appraisal of conditions and application of protection and management measures that have significant bearings on the fire loss, more general recognition of which may assist in furthering the general objectives of the Conference. [*Applause.*]

Chairman Fleming. Thank you, Mr. Ingberg. We still have before us the motion of Mr. Brenton that this Conference accept the report of the Committee on Research. It has been seconded. Is there any further discussion?

{The question was put to a vote and was carried unanimously.}
{Announcements.}

Chairman Fleming. We will now recess until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.
{The Conference adjourned at 4 P.M.}

Thursday Morning Session

May 8, 1947

THE Conference reconvened at 10:15 A.M., Chairman Fleming presiding.

Chairman Fleming. The Conference will please come to order. I shall call on Rabbi Norman Gerstenfeld, minister of the Washington Hebrew Congregation, to offer the invocation.

Rabbi Norman Gerstenfeld. O Thou Who are the seat of our hopes, the tower of strength of our souls, the guide of our hands, the vision of our courage, and the love in our hearts, help us to save our generation from the terror that cometh by night and the arrow that flieth by day, from the pestilence that walketh in darkness and the destruction that wasteth at noonday. Shield our children from the devouring fires of destruction and our dear ones from the thoughtfulness of themselves and others that would add to the devouring flame.

Fill our hearts with Thy wisdom and understanding, for except Thou keepest the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. Amen.

Chairman Fleming. Among our guests today is one very distinguished one, whose arrival in this country is fortunately timed so he can observe our deliberations today. He is Dr. S. H. Clark of the British Fire Research Organization maintained jointly by the British Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and the British Fire Officer's Committee. Dr. Clark is director of this new British Fire Research Organization and will be in this country for several weeks to come. He will undoubtedly have the opportunity to see and talk with various ones of you as he gets around. I am glad to welcome him and will ask him to stand up for a moment so that we may greet him. [*Applause.*]

{Dr. Clark stood in recognition of the applause.}

Chairman Fleming. Maj. Gen. Alden Waitt, Chief of the Chemical Warfare Service, through Col. L. M. Johnson, Chemical Warfare Service, wishes to announce that the Chemical Warfare Service will be happy to conduct tests at Edgewood Arsenal on the gas travel and characteristics of propane and butane gases in the air due to leaks from tanks. All information on this subject will be given out by the Chemical Warfare Service to all interested.

I think I will take just a moment to say a word about the music with which we have been entertained at the Conference, On Tuesday, as you are aware from a glance at your program, we heard the United States Marine Corps Band under the leadership of Maj. William F. Santelmann. Yesterday we had with us the United States Navy Band under the leadership of Lt. Com. Charles Brendler. We are indebted today to the United States Army Band under the leadership of Capt. Hugh J. Curry. These three bands are great national institutions. They have frequently toured the country, and you have probably heard them before.

Ordinarily, when we think of a brass band, we think of stirring marching music. These gentlemen can play that kind of music, too, but you have been made aware of the fact that they also come close to the symphonic ensemble, and I dare say there is not a member of any of the three organizations who could not hold down a chair in any one of the leading symphony organizations of the country. I am sure that I speak for all of you when I express my thanks to Major Santelmann, Lieutenant Commander Brendler, and Captain Curry and their men and express your appreciation for the manner in which they have added to the pleasure of this Conference. [*Applause.*]

For the last 2 days we have been considering various aspects of the fire prevention problem, but we have saved until nearly the last what is by no means least in importance, namely, the legal phase of fire prevention, for I think it is no exaggeration to say that our best techniques for fire prevention and extinguishment will be less effective unless authority exists in law to compel compliance with at least minimum safety precautions.

I have the honor of introducing Mr. J. H. Craig, chairman of the fire marshals' section, National Fire Protection Association. He has served as State fire marshal of Illinois since 1941, and during the war he was the State fire coordinator and State property officer. Mr. Craig. [*Applause.*]

Mr. John H. Craig. I am honored to have the opportunity to represent the State, provincial, and city fire marshals at this most important meeting, where the leading authorities in fire prevention work are meeting at President Truman's request in an endeavor to lessen the appalling loss of life and property due to fire.

"There ought to be a law" is the cry that goes up from the public every time there is a major fire disaster. As a result, the various State statute books are cluttered up with laws, some good, some bad, with the question of enforcement often left dangling in midair. The consensus of State fire marshals is that fire prevention laws, rules, and regulations to be effective in holding down the fire loss must be enforced at the local level, with the State offices to be used in an advisory capacity or in special cases requiring State help, or where the local officers are negligent in performing their duty.

In most all States, the State fire marshal laws provide that the officers of cities, villages, towns, and fire protection districts are charged with inspecting and examining buildings and other structures and if a dangerous condition or fire hazard is found to exist shall order the dangerous condition removed or remedied. Willful failure, neglect, or refusal to comply with the order is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine, subject, of course, to the owner's right to appeal the order to the State fire marshal.

These State fire marshal laws set the correct pattern and if every one concerned did his duty, most all fires would be prevented. However, most local officials seem to have little sense of responsibility. The tendency is to ask for an inspector from the State fire marshal office for the most trivial fire hazard conditions, such as burning of trash in an alley by a storekeeper, removal of weeds from vacant lots, rubbish accumulations, defective flues, improper use of electric extension cords, and so forth.

Fire authorities state that 60 percent of all fires are traceable to such simple, but dangerous, conditions. You know how many of the large fires start. Some careless smoker discards a lighted cigarette, the housekeeping condition is bad and contrary to local ordinances, no one bothers about enforcement. Every one should know better – including the careless smoker. The place is soon in flames. Maybe the fire department can control the fire, often it can not. It may be a hotel, a place of public assembly, or an entire community may be wiped out, with the loss of many lives, all because no one bothered about enforcing simple safety standards.

Adoption of uniform minimum codes at the State level would still leave the problem of enforcement with the State. The National Fire Protection association and the National Board of Fire Underwriters have prepared standards and codes that may be adopted by municipalities, covering every local need, such as electrical wiring, building construction, equipment for hazardous processes, volatile oils and liquefied petroleum gases, dry cleaning plants, moving picture theaters, and so forth. The National Board has prepared a booklet of suggested ordinances for municipalities, which would be simple to adopt and enforce.

Every municipality should have a fire prevention bureau, with city ordinances to cover essential problems of fire safety and with proper provisions for enforcement at the local level. Each community differs from other places in matters such as zoning, building regulations and licensing, items of no concern to the State fire marshal. We believe that fire prevention, like charity, must begin at home.

After every session of the various State legislatures, more and more responsibilities are imposed on the State fire marshal. One example is the “model hotel fire safety law” that was formulated by a special committee of State, provincial, and city fire marshals, which will be passed in some form by many States. In my State we are asking for enforcement at the local level, for the reason that there are about 3,000 hotels that would come under the act, many of them in metropolitan areas of Chicago, Peoria, Decatur, Springfield, East St. Louis, and other Illinois cities, which have competent fire prevention bureaus and do an excellent job of fire prevention inspection and seldom call on the State fire marshal office for assistance. We are constantly urging other cities and towns to organize fire prevention bureaus and adopt proper local ordinances.

I know of no other State that has a larger or more able force of field deputy fire marshals than Illinois, or whose legislature appropriates a larger budget from the fire prevention fund, collected from the fire insurance companies at the rate of one-half of 1 percent on all business done in the State during the year. In spite of this, if we were compelled by law to inspect the 3,000 hotels of the State semiannually and make the necessary rechecks and follow-up for compliance, we would not get the job done and I do not think any other State could do the work properly at the State level, especially if we are to carry out the mandates we already have from the law making bodies, which include in Illinois passing on proposals for gasoline service stations, bulk storage plants and garages, dry cleaning plants, liquefied petroleum gases, approval of plans for buildings for schools and places of public assembly, inspecting several hundred private nursing homes, county operated homes, and hospitals for the State Departments of Public Health and Public Welfare, besides the State hospitals, penal, corrective, and educational institutions. Our work includes also the investigation of some 500 fires of suspicious origin; conducting regional fire department instruction schools for firemen; visual education and demonstration programs for

school children and local organizations; cooperation with the State firemen's association and the State fire college; and sponsoring a Statewide fire prevention week program.

No State fire marshal wishes to try to organize a bureaucracy or an army of unqualified employees going about the State confusing the issues, even if funds are available. We prefer to have fewer men who know and like their work, can point out definite fire hazards and use tact, diplomacy and salesmanship, explaining methods of correction and responsibility for non compliance. We have a number of employees in our office who have demonstrated their ability and have been working on their jobs from 15 to 25 years. Their services are invaluable.

If some plan could be worked out to take the fire service out of politics from top to bottom, it would be a great stride toward greater fire safety. It is a disastrous set back to any fire protection program when some competent fire chief or chief of an inspection bureau is discharged just because a new mayor of an opposite political faith has been elected. Politics in the fire service can only promote more and bigger fires.

Summing up, I think we have some real spade work to do on a long range program which will include the following:

1. Local communities must assume and discharge their full share of responsibility for administering and enforcing fire safety.
2. To assist in bringing this about, State fire marshals must devote a major effort toward organizing and improving local controls. This will involve education and training of local inspection personnel both in standards of fire safety and inspection technique.
3. The start must be made now. Cities and villages must begin to take over their ordinary inspection work and build up from there.
4. Chambers of commerce and civic groups must take a realistic view of the fire problem and regard it as a matter of major consequence. Their interest and support are necessary.
5. We can rely on the press and radio to build public sentiment if there is adequate leadership for the program.

I hope it will be the consensus of this Conference to promote, sponsor, and endorse the principle of enforcement of fire safety legislation at the local level.

Chairman Fleming. Mr. Craig, we appreciate that address very much. You have really given us something to think about there, especially this idea of taking fire prevention out of politics. On the local level we must look for support and guidance to our municipal law officers.

I have the privilege of presenting Mr. Herman C. Wilson, president of the National Institute of Municipal Law Officers. Mr. Wilson. [*Applause.*]

Mr. Herman C. Wilson. General Fleming, ladies and gentlemen, when a lawyer gets up to talk, particularly when that lawyer is a public officer, you have a right to fear and probably expect that you are going to hear a long talk. I am going to surprise you in that respect today.

As spokesman for the city attorneys of the nation and our national organization, the National Institute of Municipal Law Officers, I want to go on record as stating that we are 100 percent back of President Truman in the objectives he has stated for this great Conference on Fire Prevention. We city attorneys fit into this picture because we write the building codes and other ordinances which govern fire prevention programs in the cities of this country, or at least we lend a legalistic touch to the technical knowledge provided by the engineers, building officials, fire chiefs, and other experts in this field before such codes and ordinances receive the final approval of our city councils and mayors.

You are all aware of the fact that a city can only do those things specifically authorized by charter or by statute. A city government is, in fact, just a vast mass of legal powers designed to further the public health, safety, and general welfare. Fire prevention regulations are certainly an exercise of these powers. That they are vital to human safety is a fact which no court can deny.

There can be no doubt that courts will uphold any city fire prevention regulation reasonably designed to prevent injury or loss of life. One of the reasons for the very existence of city government is the need for the exercise of such protection. We start, therefore, with undeniable city legal power to act in this field.

Have cities realized that they have this power? Have they exercised their legal capacities to the fullest extent to cut down on what President Truman so aptly termed the tragic sequences of the 830,000 fires that occur annually in the United States?

The answer to these questions is certainly, "No." This is to me the major finding of the excellent report of the Committee of Laws and Law Enforcement, which Judge Knox will present. While the 16,220 incorporated cities in our Nation all have the legal power to adopt building codes and fire prevention ordinances, less than 2,000 have done so. Until the remaining 14,000 cities adopt adequate building codes and fire prevention ordinances, their city officials can do nothing in this field, for they must be legally authorized before they can act.

It is also true that many of the 2,000 building codes now in effect are antiquated to the point that they are practically worthless. To translate the technical knowledge of the experts in this field into new codes where there are none and into necessary amendments where existing codes are outmoded is our job as city attorneys. That is where we can and will make our greatest contribution to the realization of the objectives of this Conference.

We feel that the report of the Committee on Laws and Law Enforcement offers in condensed capsule form the legal tools with which we can start this task. This report and its recommendations, with which the National Institute of Municipal Law Officers is heartily in accord, will indeed go down in municipal legal history as a landmark work. It will serve as an impetus to all city attorneys, for they will utilize its compiled knowledge in making the legal machinery of their cities adequate to meet the needs of adequate fire prevention.

I can assure you technical people in this field that if you will give us your aid and cooperation, we will do our part in adapting city legal machinery to the lifesaving and injury-prevention goals which all of us hope to achieve through this Conference. I thank you. [*Applause.*]

Chairman Fleming. Thank you, Mr. Wilson. You have made a very important contribution to this Conference.

On a State level we must look to our State attorneys general for support of our activities. The Honorable George Neuner, Attorney General of the State of Oregon, speaks as representative of the National Association of Attorneys General. Mr. Neuner. [*Applause.*]

Hon. George Neuner. General Fleming, ladies and gentlemen of the Conference, it has been a revelation to me to have the privilege of attending this Conference. I must confess that while I thought that I knew something about fire prevention and fire-law enforcement, little did I realize the magnitude of this subject until I had the privilege of attending this Conference. You speak in millions and billions of dollars of property destroyed by fire, which reminds me of the young schoolboy who came home one day and said, "Dad, how much is a billion dollars?" The father was somewhat occupied and did not give the attention to the son that he should have. Unthinkingly he remarked, "That is a 'helluva' of lot money." The next day the boy came home crying, and the father said to him, "Son, what is the matter?" He said, "Dad, you did not give me the right answer." [*Laughter.*]

It is with somewhat of a feeling of humility that I even attempt to represent or to speak for the National Association of Attorneys General. The personnel of this association is composed of some of the ablest lawyers in the land, many of whom would grace the ermine of our highest courts. Through the Association of the Attorneys General the Council of State Governments, that great organization which has accomplished so much by disseminating and distributing the laws throughout the various States of the Nation, has performed a marvelous service by unifying laws that affect the daily life and conduct of every man, woman, and child in the Nation.

Each State, of course, has its own problems and legal questions. The procedure in one State may not be applicable in another. The attorney general plays an important part in his respective State in construing the statutes, and advising the agencies of the State Government. In some States he is the public prosecutor, while in others he prosecutes only when directed by the chief executive, but in each he is at all times the legal advisor to the State officers.

Would that every attorney general of our organization could have been here and have participated in these deliberations. I know it would have been instructive and would enlighten him to perform better his official duties. I know each would be impressed, as was I, with the President's sincere and timely message delivered from this platform.

From the legal standpoint Attorney General Clark gave us much food for thought. As a prosecutor of some 20 years, one realizes and appreciates that of all of the criminal cases tried throughout the land – I think I am safe in saying that perhaps the same result obtains elsewhere in our State – the crime of arson in its different aspects gets the least number of convictions of all the crimes punishable under the law.

Why? Because, as General Clark stated, the evidence usually is burned up. But it has been my experience that in nearly all of the cases in which the prosecution was successful, it was largely

dependent upon circumstantial evidence, the most technical guarded evidence known to our jurisprudence.

The average person knows little about gathering circumstantial evidence and preserving it so that the prosecutor can go into court with it and satisfy a strict construction of the law, and it follows that the average juror is somewhat prejudiced against circumstantial evidence. Yet to my mind, when the chain of circumstances is complete, it is the best evidence that there is, as I have frequently stated to juries, circumstances do not lie, and witnesses sometimes do. *[Laughter.]*

It is therefore becomes necessary, indeed imperative, that through the legal heads of government – Attorney General, District Attorneys, City Attorneys – that law enforcing personnel must be schooled and instructed in the gathering and preserving of circumstantial evidence. Usually the fireman has his duties to perform and overlooks some very important features in every fire. It requires particularly trained investigators, and schools for that purpose should be conducted throughout the various States, counties, and municipalities in order to have men trained in that line of duty who will get on the job immediately and preserve every bit of evidence available.

In our State, if you will pardon my transgressing from my assigned subject – I can only speak of conditions that obtain in our State – we take pride in our fire organizations. We have a very efficient State fire marshal department. We have many efficient fire departments beginning with the city of Portland, our largest city, down to many of our small municipalities. We have good fire laws, due to the efforts of our national organizations. Our last legislature strengthened our laws to conform with the requirements of your associations.

Under the police power of our State – and I take it, this means in every State – the municipal ordinances must conform to the general criminal laws of the State, and it is necessary for the municipalities merely to pass ordinances reenacting State building codes and covering local details applying to the respective communities. Our legislature has given and will give us the laws necessary to accomplish the desired results.

We in Oregon have serious fire problems. Our State has about 25 percent of the standing merchantable timber of the Nation. When I tell you that in one of our western counties there are about 100 sawmills or more operating throughout the county, each cutting from 10,000 to over 100,000 feet board measure per day, you can appreciate the volume of logging that is entailed and the fire menaces that it creates. But through our effective forestry fire protection association in cooperation with the United States Forest Service we have in the last year reduced that fire hazard to a minimum.

There are also many rural problems, and I take it that the rural problem is the one that generally is most difficult to solve. When you consider the area of our State and the population of the entire State, approximately that of the city of Washington, you can readily visualize the fire problems presented throughout its area.

But your educational program is timely. Your observance and enforcement program is imperative. Your engineering program is also very important, and now it remains for us by

percept and example to contribute our individual efforts in order that the entire program may bring about intended results in education in fire prevention and the enforcement of the fire laws.

It is about the beginning of the fire season in our land at home. The time is now. I believe you may rest assured that the attorneys general as an association, collectively and individually, will play its and their parts efficiently and effectively. We all have a job to do. Let us return to our respective homes and resolve to do it as lovers of this great land, rededicated ourselves to the protection of life and property and firmly do our duty as citizens to our God and country.
[*Applause.*]

Chairman Fleming. Thank you, Mr. Neuner.

The report of the Committee on Laws and Law Enforcement should naturally round out the able presentation of the last three speakers. For that report I call upon the Honorable John C. Knox, judge of the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York. Judge Knox.
[*Applause.*]

Hon. John Knox. Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, my fellow delegates, we are ready today upon what may be, if we so will, a great occasion. We have come from the East, the West, the South, and the North. We are here for one purpose and for one purpose only, and that is to preserve the heritage that is ours and to see that our fellow citizens may live their lives in peace and safety.

Most of us, I suppose, know something of politics. We have seen life as it is lived, and some of us have sought, and perhaps found, the object of our personal desires. But if this be true, there is one obligation that rests upon each and every one of us, be he a Republican or a Democrat, and that is that each of us should do all that he can do to see that our property is preserved and that human beings be freed from the hazards that can and must be avoided.

The danger that is most threatening to America today is not Communism; it is not Russia; it is not the ascendancy of either the Democratic or the Republican parties; the terror of our lives is the danger of fire. When that cry rings out in the day or in the night, we have no thought of politics. The idea of partisan advantage is something that never enters our minds. We are part and parcel of the common weal. Our only consideration is that each of us may do what he can to minimize loss and to see that humanity is saved from the fire, suffering, and death to which it is now subjected.

In doing this in recent years we have been far from successful. Due to inertia and carelessness we have borne witness to the holocausts of Coconut Grove, the Winecoff, and the Hotel LaSalle. Sobered by this experience, we are here today at the invitation of the President of the United States to see if we cannot evolve a program whereby America, Democrats and Republicans alike, whites and blacks, Jews and Gentiles, can save themselves from the ravages of fire and smoke by which we are constantly menaced.



COMMITTEE ON LAWS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Ladies and gentlemen, the responsibility that rests upon us is nothing short of tremendous. If any one of us leaves this Conference with the idea that financial considerations should transcend the value of human life, this meeting is a matter of complete futility. Such considerations unfortunately constitute the fundamental problem that confronts us today in bringing about the enactment and the enforcement of adequate fire prevention laws. But human life, as I have said, is far more important than is the cost of the protection that we desperately need and which ultimately we must have.

When we leave here to go to our homes, let us carry the conviction that America's most priceless possession is the humanity that has made us great and that it is the thing that will preserve us from all enemies, foreign and domestic. If this be our conviction we will do all that we can to preserve that humanity together with its worldly possessions.

This convocation to me is a matter of inspiration. It has made me believe that each of us in a very real sense may, if he will, be the keeper of his brother. In the presence of the men who fight fires, standing before persons who from experience know the terror of conflagrations, associating with men and women who succor and give relief to those who suffer and die as a result of fires, I stand very reverently and very humbly. I give to each of them my tribute of respect and gratitude and, may I say, my offer of help.

I know, nevertheless, that whatever happens, whatever may be the results, there is in the background something that is called the law. By chance, I am the chairman of the committee having to do with that phase of the Conference. For days and days, and weeks and weeks, the members of that committee have labored diligently, may I say patriotically, in an endeavor to suggest to States, communities, and municipalities a means and method whereby, by a minimum of expense and imposition, they may serve the interests of our most priceless possession, the preservation of human life.

The report that we have made is available to each member of this Conference, and many of you, I know, have seen and read it. Without going through the details of our recommendations, I may say that they are the unanimous conclusions of the membership of the committee.

Mr. Chairman, I move the adoption of the report of the Committee on Laws and Law Enforcement. [*Applause.*]

Chairman Fleming. That was a powerful exhortation, Judge Knox. It has been moved that the report of the Committee on Laws and Law Enforcement be adopted by this Conference. Is there a second to that motion?

Mr. Charles Rhyne (Washington, D.C.). I second the motion.

{The question was put to a vote and was carried unanimously.}

Chairman Fleming. And now I have a special treat. Since Tuesday you have been listening to some very important statements, but until now the Conference has been lacking the feminine touch and the woman's point of view.

I now present a lady who was born in Minneapolis not many years ago, as you can see; was graduated from Smith College with high honors; and has won distinction in the field of social work and civic service. She was active in civilian defense all during the war and is now national chairman of the Civilian Advisory Committee of the Women's Army Corps. Mrs. Oswald Bates Lord! [*Applause.*]

Mrs. Oswald Bates Lord. Thank you, General Fleming. Ladies and gentlemen, the part I have been asked to play at this Conference has already been beneficial. In doing my homework and in reading how to keep from going to blazes and 13 ways not to burn your home, I have set up a program for my husband this weekend that will keep him very busy. [*Laughter.*]

Our small home in the woods and hills of Connecticut is about to go through a complete metamorphosis, and by Monday I shall ask our local fire chief, who is also the local plumber and electrician [*Laughter.*], to inspect and give our home a medal of merit.

My husband is rebelling a little since I have told him I thought we had better replace our hand-hewn shingles with something more fireproof. There will be no time this weekend for tennis or for the garden.

Education of all kinds starts in the home. How our children turn out depends on the training, encouragement, teaching which they receive at home and the example they are given by their parents and by their guardians. As children have a natural sense of dependency, we utilize this fact in their training, teaching them how to eat, teaching them how to dress, and teaching them discipline, and we adult homemakers feel that we have had all the training necessary. But sometimes I wonder.

Let's wonder today about one of the greatest causes of loss of property and life in homes, fire. And let's discuss what the homemakers of America can do toward reducing this hazard, what they can do by training both themselves and their children. Fire is no fun when it strikes our home, and even the best prepared and best fitted and protected houses can be struck.

As I make this statement, it takes me back to an instance which happened at another White House conference and happened in the Blue Room of the White House. It was a conference on child welfare, and many delegates were gathered. Mrs. Roosevelt was addressing the conference. Suddenly the curtains of the White House went up in a blaze. Mrs. Roosevelt said, "The White House is well protected and well equipped for fires. I want all of your individual attention. I want the conference to continue, and if for some reason the fire cannot be put under control, there are exits, and we shall all leave in an orderly fashion." No one turned their eyes toward the blazing fire, and within a few minutes the fire was extinguished.

What can we homemakers do toward keeping our homes free from fire hazards? First, we must teach our families that an ounce of fire prevention is much better than the fanciest fire engine. Second, we must look for booby traps in our homes, especially in our basements. Do we check and clean our heating systems once a year? Are we sure that kindling, left-over paint, and papers are a safe distance from our furnaces?

Are our fuses a proper size? Does the house have good wiring, and is it well strung, not under rugs and over hooks and in exposed places where wear may make it dangerous? How are our chimney flues and our cooking stoves? Are they well insulated? Have we left around carelessly any old paint or furniture polishing cloths?

I was very much impressed by a story I read in the paper of a 23 year old woman who died in a hospital in Chicago recently from burns suffered when a fire in a broom closet ignited her dress when she opened the door of the closet. The evidence indicated that the outbreak occurred in some furniture cloths, which ignited spontaneously.

Do we always remember to put away our electric irons? Over 90 percent of the electrical fires every year are due to misuse of our electrical equipment, such as irons. Do we have good screens in front of our fire places?

Third, we must avoid doing things that we think will not matter. Too many of us think we can handle the situation and that "this one time will not matter." Therefore, too many people are trying to do their own wiring. Too many people are dry-cleaning at home with combustible liquids that can even be touched off, as you all know, by static spark caused by rubbing materials together. Too many of us are forcing our furnaces to get more heat. Some people put pennies in fuses; some empty hot ashes into wooden boxes; and too many housewives empty the contents of their vacuum cleaner bags into incinerators or stoves, not realizing the power of dust and that even flour dust under the right condition could blow a car up as high as seven stories.

There are those who empty full ash trays after a party into wastebaskets without checking to see if all cigarette butts are out, and there are many who do not realize that the only safe place for

gasoline in inside a car. Too many leave strike-anywhere matches around where children, and even mice and squirrels, can ignite them.

Lastly, there is the bedsmokers' club. [*Laughter.*] The smoker who believes that if he should fall asleep, the tickle of the flame will wake him up before it is too late does not realize that smoldering textiles give off the lethal array of combustible gases that are usually the cause of death of people who smoke in bed.

All of these people who do these things just this one time have helped to initiate something over 350,000 dwelling fires a year with damages exceeding \$100,000,000. We must remember that children are not expected to have judgment, adults are; and in teaching our children, this concept must always be remembered.

Our fire departments all over the country will cooperate in planning and conducting inspections of our homes for fire hazards and will help the communities teach and demonstrate safe conditions and practices in the home, and I hope at this conference that there will be action taken and plans made to outline certain specific programs that the homemaker and the housewife can take part in.

I have put a lot of emphasis on children. Why? Let me remind you of a few figures that most of you already know. Accidents take a yearly toll of almost 20,000 boys and girls under 20, and most of these accidents are preventable. The high proportion of these fatal accidents to children take place in the home, and 20,000 children in one year died of burns that could be traced back to adult carelessness. Last year in January over 7,000 children were known by State agencies to be crippled because of burns.

A child imitates and observes and performs as his parents, and many times a chance a parent takes may be inconsequential as far as the parent is concerned, but to the young imitator it may be fatal.

In closing, let us remember that, as parents and homemakers, our responsibility lies in doing for our children what we should be doing for ourselves, protecting the child, restraining the child, conditioning the child by training, and developing an awareness. Not being able to eliminate all hazardous situations, a child should be taught to recognize a danger and meet it, face bravely situations that cannot be avoided, and encouraged to call for help when assistance is needed.

Before I sit down, I want to remind the audience that since I began talking to you 18 more American homes have burned. Thank you. [*Applause.*]

Chairman Fleming. I was right, Mrs. Lord, when I said that our deliberations up to now had lacked the feminine touch. I think our Conference results will be much more fruitful for your having been here.

Now for the last of our committee reports. It almost goes without saying that we shall fail in our objectives unless we have the support of the people. Fire prevention is not just something for

fire departments or city officials or State and Federal officials to do something about. Every citizen has his part to play.

I now call for the report of the Committee on Organized Public Support. I am sorry, Mr. Williams, that you were not able to be with us Tuesday, when I introduced you in absentia. It was a good introduction, and I hope you look it up when you get the transcript. [*Laughter.*]

I present Mr. W. Walter Williams, first citizen of the State of Washington and chairman of the committee. Mr. Williams. [*Applause.*]

Mr. W. Walter Williams. General Fleming, distinguished guests, and members of the President's Conference. I wonder if you have not been impressed, as I have been impressed, during these days of the Conference with the very gracious and generous manner in which the General has introduced the various speakers. It suggests to me an incident that transpired in Cincinnati last fall when former Governor, now Senator, John Bricker was being presented to a large audience at the closing session of a convention that I was attending there. The man who was introducing him left absolutely nothing to chance; he took nothing for granted. He had prepared this introduction with a full sheet of typewritten information single-spaced. As he read on, line after line, he just built halo after halo about the head of John Bricker. At long last he concluded, and when John Bricker arose to his feet he stood before the microphone for a moment or two, had an almost angelic expression on his face, then said, "That introduction makes me feel like a lifelong Christian holding four aces." [*Laughter.*]

I rather think that our Chairman has done a job of making all of us feel a good deal like lifelong Christian holding four aces, and I wonder, inasmuch as we are rapidly coming to the conclusion of this Conference, if turnabout would not be fair play, and it would therefore be in order for us to pause just a moment to give this fellow who has been presiding over this Conference a little round of applause in appreciation. [*Applause.*]

I knew you would feel that way about it.

You have heard a series of very interesting talks during this Conference. Those talks have been given by Government officials, including the very highest of our Government officials, the President of the United States. They have included jurists; they have included businessmen; they have included representatives of the firefighting forces; they have included educators; they have included one charming and, according to the Chairman – and I am sure all of us will agree – young lady. In a word, we have had a cross section of the American public represented in the addresses which have been presented to us at this Conference, and all the way through, the thread has been these two points: (1) America is experiencing appalling losses in life and property because of fire; and (2) we ought to do something about it.

We have been listening to these fine addresses – and you will agree that they have been fine addresses – but now we have come to that part of the Conference where we have to do something about it. In a word, we are at the point where we have to take action.

The General referred yesterday to the fact that Mark Twain had pointed out the importance of brevity. Yes, and Mark Twain also indicated that many people talked about the weather, but very few did anything about it.

We are at the point where we have to do something about this thing about which we have been talking and listening for the last two or three days. I think at one and the same time we have a grave responsibility, and a shining opportunity. Who, if not you, who, if not the group represented right here in this room now, would undertake the job or could undertake the job to do it successfully?

At the same time that we have a grave responsibility to discharge to the public, we also have a shining opportunity, because, as we listen to the mounting figures of death and property losses measured in terms of dollars, think of the tremendous opportunity we have for positive achievement to the degree that we can succeed in the program that we are undertaking.

I should like to call upon the members of this Conference to accept, if you please, as a byword, as a watchword, of the Conference, the words that were included in a citation that was given to a young Jewish scientist by the United States Government recently. This young Jewish scientist was a member of the Manhattan Project. The details have not been released by the Government, but sufficient information was given out to tell us that somebody committed a very grave error, and lives were put in jeopardy because of the fact that this error had been committed. This young Jewish scientist, drawing, I suppose, on something that had been inculcated into his character from away back when, acted and as a result of his action he took the full force of the radioactive particles. But because of the fact that he took them, nobody else was injured.

He died, and, therefore, he gave his life in expression of practical service to his fellow men. The citation read, "He took affirmative action," and I can think of nothing better, Mr. Chairman, growing out of this Conference and the deliberations of these two or three days than for each one of us to resolve that he will accept as his slogan, if you please, and as his guide, as we leave this Conference hall and go back to our respective homes, these words, "I will take affirmative action," in trying to carry out the purposes of this Conference.

I am going to read only a portion of the Committee's recommendations, because I think that copies have found their way into the hands of most of you. But without reading the subheads, I think it is important for us at least to have brought to our attention at this time the four main heads. Let me read them to you briefly:

1. It is recommend that a continuing committee be appointed by the General Chairman in order to implement the action program of the President's Conference; provide a gage on progress made in States, cities, and rural communities throughout the country in the months following the Conference; and maintain the interest in fire prevention on the part of the large number of important national, nongovernmental groups represented on the Committee on Organized Public Support, as well as the general public.

2. It is recommend that each of the Governors of the 48 States, the Governors of the Territories, and the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, appoint Statewide fire-safety committees composed of the appropriate public officials, including State foresters and representatives of nongovernmental groups, to explore the fire loss problem in all its ramifications within their respective jurisdictions, for the purpose of setting up practical fire prevention programs tailored to the needs in each particular area.
3. It is recommended that where an effective fire prevention committee does not already exist, the mayors, city managers, or chief executives of all cities, towns, villages, or other municipalities appoint a fire safety committee composed of both public officials and representatives of nongovernmental organizations to carry on a continuous campaign of fire safety throughout the year.
4. It is recommend that each of the National and State organizations represented on the Committee on Organized Public Support be urged to endorse and support within the limits of the objectives set forth in its charter, constitution, or bylaws, the recommendations of the President's Conference on Fire prevention. Each organization should extend the fullest cooperation possible at the National, State, and local levels.

Mr. Chairman, before presenting the motion for the adoption of that committee recommendation, I should like to make this additional statement. Those of us who are in this room do not believe in communism; we do not believe in statism; we do not believe in any kind of totalitarian regime. We believe in the potentialities of the individual. But that at the same time calls upon us to see to it that the individual does his job.

Sometimes I think we are inclined to think that, "Well, I as an individual cannot do very much." Let me give you just a grand example to show how wrong you can be in that belief. Three or four years ago, after the war had got well under way, the Boeing Aircraft Co. in Seattle was having a great deal of difficulty in recruiting employees to turn out its B-17's and B-29's, and so after having exhausted the orthodox methods of recruitment, it called upon the Army and the Seattle Chamber of Commerce to help solve the problem, and here is what they did.

They called together a huge mass meeting at the stadium of the University of Washington. That stadium ordinarily would hold perhaps 45,000 people. On this particular occasion the outpouring of the public was so great that by loudspeaker each person was asked to crowd over so that three people could sit where two would normally sit, and so I suppose it is safe to say that there were 60,000 people gathered there that evening.

The Governor of the State was there, the mayor was there, we had other dignitaries there. Gen. Hap Arnold was there and gave a half-hour radio talk on a national hook-up. It was a great occasion. But perhaps you will understand why the outpouring when I tell you that Jerry Colona was there, and Frances Langford was there, and Bob Hope was there. Need I say more?

Yet in spite of the attractions and the grandness of that program, there was a young fellow who was wearing the khaki of Uncle Sam's Army who stole the show. Just about the middle of the program he stood out there in the open end of that horseshoe stadium, which had as its backdrop beautiful Lake Washington and the Cascade Mountains, and standing there in a simple, nonrhetorical style he said, "I want to say a few words to you about the purchase of war bonds." Then he went on to say, "Perhaps you think that the purchase of a \$25 bond does not amount to much. I want to see if I can prove that you are mistaken. I wish every one of you would take a match out of his pocket. I am going to wait just a few moments, then I am going to ask that those floodlights be turned out, than I am going to ask that each one of you light his match."

Suddenly the lights went out and there was the most dazzling spectacle that those people who were there that night ever saw in their lives. A solid, blazing mass of light in a horseshoe made up of 1 match plus 59,999 others!

Do you think he drove home his point? I'll say he did! Twenty five dollars multiplied by 60,000 is a pretty tidy little sum, so he drove home to every individual there the lesson and the fact that the individual and the activity on the part of each individual do count, and I ask each of you not to forget that as you leave the halls of this conference room and go back home.

I listened the other day to a British war correspondent who had just come from England. He was apparently quite a high-up one, because he was a member of the King's entourage that went into Coventry just after that bombing. As they walked through the city with its rubble, mess, and smoke, they were very much depressed. Just as they were leaving the city, this ace correspondent pointed out the fact that the wind somehow or other came along providentially and blew away the smoke and illuminated a sign which was posted across the church which had been miraculously spared. The words on that sign were, "It all depends on me."

This Conference is about to break up, but I am calling on you, each and every one of you, to remember this. The Conference will have been futile, as the judge said a moment ago, it will have been a dismal failure, if we have merely come here to listen to a series of speeches. But if we go home pledged within our own respective souls that we really mean what we are talking about as we have sat here for these three days, and that each of us is going to do something about it; if we become possessed of the fact that, like the young man who pointed out that a \$25 bond does, after all, not mean much, that as individuals we do count and can do something positively and effectively at home; and if we will also accept the challenge, as in the words of the Coventry church sign, that "It depends on me," whether the job is going to be done at home or not, then this Conference will not only not have been a failure, but it will have been a glorious success, because this group of 1,000 or 1,500 men and women will go out to the four corners of the United States of America, and the expression of what is in their souls, because of what they have learned here and because of what they are determined to do back in their own home quarters, will produce tremendous results.

So, Mr. Chairman, as I move the adoption of this recommendation, I am going to call upon each one here not merely to give a perfunctory "aye," but to vote by rising, not merely to approve the recommendation, which I am assuming, but to express by that rising vote that each one is

pledging to himself that he will go home and do a job to carry out the purposes of this Conference.

Mr. Chairman, I move the adoption of this recommendation.

{The delegates stood and applauded.}

Chairman Fleming. I think we all understand now why he is called the first citizen of Washington. You have heard the motion. Is there a second?

Mr. J. W. Vincent (Cincinnati, Ohio). I second the motion.

Mr. Howard Welty (Oakland, Calif.). Mr. Chairman, I am representing the secondary schools of California. This is the time, it seems to me, for us to take appropriate action on a matter on which we failed to act yesterday. Mr. Percy Bugbee, speaking for the National Fire Protection Association, told us that 120,000 of the 800,000 fires annually occurring in this country came from the carelessness of smokers, and he made a suggestion at the end which we failed to take action on, that we ask the tobacco companies, who profit by the sale of cigarettes, to join their immense strength to ours in bringing to the attention of smokers all over our country the things which they do and should not do. I am sure that the tobacco companies would welcome from us the suggestion that they join in this great national campaign for public welfare. They will spend thousands of dollars in advertising to teach the public to smoke Camels, but they say nothing against taking a Camel to bed with you.

Mr. Chairman, with that in mind I move that this Conference urge upon the tobacco companies manufacturing cigarettes the carrying on of a Nationwide campaign of education against the carelessness of smokers, not only as a civic privilege of cooperation and a matter of public welfare, but as an imperative duty arising out of the hazard to life and property created by and in direct proportion to the growth and success of this great business enterprise.

Chairman Fleming. I wonder if everybody could hear that. Maybe I had better read it up here.

Mr. Welty. I am not sure that you can, but I think I could make them hear it, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Fleming. Did everybody hear that? No, they did not. Will you step up here?

{Mr. Welty came to the platform and repeated his motion.}

Mr. Lewis McBain (Massachusetts). Mr. Chairman, I would like to second that.

Chairman Fleming. We have no time this morning to discuss it; I will put it to a vote.

{The question was put to a vote and was carried unanimously.}

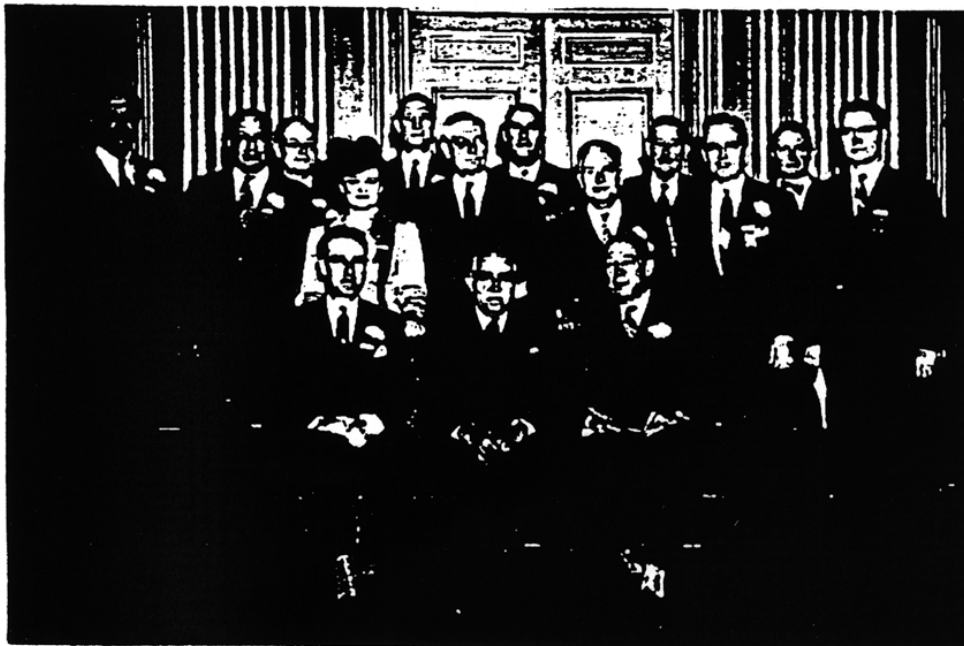
Mr. Leroy Gates (Nyack, N.Y.). Mr. Chairman, may I have the privilege of the floor? I see that according to the program there is no further opportunity for discussion from the floor. This should be a note on which the Conference should close. I present it now in lieu of later.

Today is the sixty-third birthday of the gentleman who occupies the position of the President of the United States, and in deference to the initiative and foresight on his part which called this Conference together, and the attention which he has given to us personally here, I move you, sir, that this Conference send him congratulations, felicitations, and our best wishes, our heartiest wishes, for many more years of life and happiness.

Chairman Fleming. He has moved that, because this is the President's birthday, because of his interest in this program of fire prevention, this Conference send him its congratulations, felicitations, and wishes for many more happy birthdays. All in favor signify by saying "aye."

{The motion was put to a vote and was carried unanimously.}

Chairman Fleming. Now we are ready for the presentation of the action program which will, we trust, summarize our conclusions and lay the groundwork for future action back in our home communities. I regret to report that Mr. W. E. Reynolds, Commissioner of Public Buildings and chairman of the Conference Coordinating Committee, who was to have presented the program, is absent because of illness. He is convalescing nicely and should be able to return to his desk shortly.



CONFERENCE STAFF

Seated, left to right: Lewis A. Vincent, Maj. Gen. Philip B. Fleming, General Chairman, and A. Bruce Bielaski.

Standing, left to right: Russell McGuire, John L. Werheim, R. E. Vernor, Hester M. Bell, John B. West, R. E. Truman, F. C. McAuliffe, R. E. Wilson, William J. Chattin, Douglas H. Timmerman, George G. Traver, and Wendell Sether.

Before he became ill, Mr. Reynolds did much hard work on preliminary arrangements for the Conference, and I feel that much of the success of the meeting is due to his efforts.

To present the program of Mr. Reynolds, I have the pleasure of introducing the Honorable Louis Johnson of Clarksburg, W. Va., a member and vice-chairman of the Committee on Laws and Law Enforcement, a former national commander of the American Legion. Colonel Johnson holds a Legion of Honor decoration for services in the First World War. He served as Assistant Secretary of War from 1937 to 1940 and was then my boss, and was personal representative of the President in India in 1942. Colonel Johnson. [*Applause.*]

Hon. Louis Johnson. Mr. Chairman, gentlemen of the Conference, mine is an easy task. I wonder first, though, if those of you who are here realize what an impact your Conference and your deliberations have had upon the Nation.

I returned last night from the West. In the press and on the radio there has probably been fuller coverage than anything of like type in the history of the country.

You have had these six reports, reports upon which much time and effort have been expended. You have had exhortations such as that of Judge Knox this morning which, when you see it in print, you will agree is one magnificent document.

Mine is the privilege of calling your attention to each of these six reports, saying to you that the Coordinating Committee has combined in the document before you all six of the reports. It is called the Action Program. I hope you have looked at it. It gives you the message of the President on the first page and of our esteemed and able Chairman on the second page, and goes on through, with the summary and coordination of the six reports.

I want to say to those of you who have not read it that the men who have made this compilation of the six reports assure me, just as in the plan of action, which Walter Williams just presented to you, that nothing is left out in the summary, although where they cross into each other's fields it has been somewhat condensed.

Two additions to the individual reports have been made. I want to read you those two additions, because thereafter I shall move for the adoption, as the plan of action or action program, of this condensed compilation and summary of the six reports.

The two additions are to the research section of the action program, and they read as follows:

1. The need for ready availability of information, complete and up to date, pertaining to the subject of fire prevention, fire protection, fire loss experience, and research development is emphasized. A central library facility would serve this need.
2. While endorsing the national-state-local governmental and private programs for fire prevention and control for our natural resources, the Conference recommends continuous research to improve, where practical, methods of fire prevention and control in these essential States.

Mr. Chairman, gentlemen of the Conference, in order that the waves started already from here may continue in the interest of saving life and in fire prevention, I move you that the report of the Action Program be adopted as presented to this Conference. [*Applause.*]

Chairman Fleming. Copies of the Action Program were available to you today outside. I presume most of you have had them and have seen them. Colonel Johnson has explained the small additions made to what you have. Is there a second to the motion?

Mr. Homer B. Oates (Wheeling, W. Va.). I second the motion.

{The question was put to a vote and was carried unanimously.}

Chairman Fleming. The last of the program – and it is now up to all of us to put into effect and make it work. In that endeavor we shall need the support of the mayors and the city managers of our cities.

The president of the United States Conference of Mayors is a publisher by profession. He has a unique distinction. Appointed city manager of Grand Rapids, Mich., in 1929, he consented to serve only on the condition that he would be permitted to waive the \$12,000 salary that went with the job and work for \$1 a year instead. The city very reluctantly, I suppose, met his terms. Grand Rapids, I think I am safe in saying, thus got the highest-class service at the lowest price in the history of municipal government.

Since then our next speaker has been four times elected mayor of Grand Rapids. The Honorable George W. Welsh. [*Applause.*]

Hon. George W. Welsh. General Fleming, ladies and gentlemen, might I pay my respects to two of the previous speakers, who, I consider, have made especially important contributions to this Conference? I refer to the genial lady, Mrs. Lord, who, I consider, has given the best exposition of fire prevention that I have heard in a long, long time. I should like to pay my respects to Mr. Walter Williams for that inspiring appeal that he made to get some action from this Conference.

I should like to tell you, General Fleming – and I was glad to hear the gentleman over there make a motion to pay some respect to President Truman on his birthday – it is a refreshing thing after years of the most terrible waste of life that civilization has ever seen, to find a group thinking and paying some attention to the saving of human life.

I am mindful of the fact, General Fleming, that a year ago you also presided at a conference on traffic safety; and now it is fire. I rather imagine that the purpose of these conferences is to focus attention and dramatize, if possible, the need for action along these lines.

It is a significant thing that these conferences are held here in Washington, where the eyes of the Nation, at present particularly, are concentrated because of the activities of our Congress.

Doesn't it seem just a little bit inconsistent, to put it mildly, that while here we are considering the problem of saving human life, up on the Hill last Monday a congressional committee struck from an appropriations bill a sum which is negligible in comparison with the amounts of money that have been spent, a mere \$5,000,000, that wipes out the maintenance of 148 traffic control towers on airports?

This Conference dramatizes the need for fire prevention. General, I should like to ask you – you have flown a good deal – how would you like to land on some of these airports without a traffic control tower to bring you in? And I should like to ask the gentlemen on the Hill, What must we do to dramatize the need for air safety? Must we have four or five crashes and the loss of human life to wake them up?

I would like to suggest to you, General – and I commend you and the committee that has been responsible for the conduct of these conferences – that it might be a good idea to call another conference on air safety.

While we are talking about it, there are many ways that life is lost and endangered in addition to fire, automobile traffic, and airways. Up on the Hill we of the cities are interested in the removal of a cancerous growth that is eating into the vitals of all our great industrial cities, slum areas, breeders of crime and disease, while a nonchalant attitude is taken by our representatives, who state that while it is important, perhaps, that veterans and other citizens be provided with housing, and while it would be a good thing to remove and clean up these slum areas, that is a matter than can wait for another year.

What kind of mental processes must be going on? Are they mindful of what you are doing here? I think the country is, and it seems that under the very figurative noses of Congress they should be alerted to these dangers that frighten the country.

I do not know of any group that is more appropriate to be represented here today than the United States Conference of Mayors. This is strictly a city problem. I am reminded that quite some time ago I saw a copy of the first proceedings of the first Board of Trustees of the Village of Detroit. It was a record of the first meetings of any public officials, of what is now one of the country's great dynamic industrial centers. In that were the first ordinances that were passed; the first paid public officials were hired and their salaries fixed.

Perhaps it will interest you to know that the first ordinances that were passed by the first Board of Trustees of the Village of Detroit were fire ordinances, and they provided that at each house or cottage there should be a ladder with so many rungs on it, a barrel containing so much water; and the first employees were two inspectors to see to it that the provisions of the ordinances were carried out. The first police powers and the first penalties were imposed for violation of those ordinances. It reads somewhat humorously.

I found out that Widow Campbell was fined \$1.50 because she had a couple of rungs out of her ladder. Somebody else's barrel was not full enough of water.

This is strictly a major problem of cities and communities. I was very much interested in the address of the state fire marshal. I have not yet met a fire marshal, as such, who has ever thrown a pail of water or helped a child down a ladder. We had a rather disastrous fire in a neighboring community, and I asked a group of our firefighters, led by our present marshal, to make a study of that fire and come back and tell us what we would have to do in order to be assured that such a catastrophe would not happen in our city. They brought back a very enlightening report, very well done. Summed up, it somewhat paraphrased the great statement of Winston Churchill when he said. "Give us the tools and we will do the job." There was not a recommendation in the report that proper finances could not cure.

I am particularly glad that following me this morning is the distinguished Governor of West Virginia. Your Excellency, I am particularly pleased that you are here, because it rather gives a background to what I think is the real crux of this and many other problems.

It is a rather strange thing, if you stop to think about it, that this Conference is sponsored by the Federal Government, officers of the Federal Government, called on invitation of the President himself. I believe, whether you know it or not, that back of the inspiration to do something along this line comes a recognition that the war emphasized particularly that one of the great strengths of this republic of ours lies in these great industrial communities. More munitions of war were turned out in the state that I come from than perhaps any other spot on the face of the globe. While we were considerably late in getting into the fracas, we demonstrated that the industrial communities of America were capable of producing the munitions of war. We were able to fulfill the plea of Winston Churchill for the tools, adequate and in tremendous quantities, and apparently all at once it has dawned on the Federal Government that anything that is done to aid these industrial communities is a good thing for the country.

I recently made a trip with a delegation of mayors from nine different States. We started in my home town, went to Des Moines, Kansas City, St. Louis, New Orleans, Birmingham, Ala.; Memphis, Indianapolis, Louisville, and Cincinnati. We did it for two or three purposes: First, to focus attention on this thing that is now nationally recognized, the importance of local government, and to perhaps strengthen the hands of the local officials, and, incidentally, to pick up a few items of information.

I know in a general way, as anyone does who has been long in local government, that all municipalities are in legislative straitjackets. There is no more democracy in the great communities of this great republic than there was in some of the countries that we defeated, and it is only a matter of degree in the various states. I thought we were pretty bad in Michigan, but we were not nearly so bad off in Michigan as they are in Iowa.

One of our colleagues, when he got back home to Connecticut, found out that his State was perhaps worse than any he had been into. The great municipalities, starting with New York and going on down the line, are legislative captives, they are starving financially.

You say, "Do a job." I have yet to hear a recommendation of the one thing that would make it possible to do the job. Some speaker this morning suggested appointing permanent fire prevention committees. We have them trained committees, uniformed committees, with

equipment such as it is, who are on the job 24 hours a day. That is were the job is going to be done. Give us the money to engage the men so that inspections at not too long an interval can be made of every home and every building, where the trained eye of a firefighter will go in and point out what is wrong. Give us the finances to equip these men with the kind of equipment that they ought to have, and the job will be done.

I understand that in this audience are representatives of building and construction interests, fire insurance companies. I remember that the gentleman who spoke for fire marshals said something about the tax of \$1.50 a thousand that was applied to fire insurance policies that went into the State coffers. Did you gentlemen ever stop to think that if a proper job was done in these cities and fire losses were less, it would be profitable to you? Why don't you head a movement that will go on these rurally dominated legislatures where all cities are inadequately represented? Why don't you spearhead the movement and ask that a tax be placed on your insurance policies of, say, a dollar a thousand that will be returned to the local fire departments for their use in the local fire departments exclusively in fire prevention and fire protection. I will guarantee you that your losses will be reduced.

The United States Conference of Mayors is presently engaged in a crusade, if you please, to call attention to the fact that most problems come where most people are. This is no longer a great agricultural Nation. We are the greatest industrial Nation on the face of the globe, but we haven't homes to house our people and we haven't adequate fire protection to protect those homes. We do not have adequate voice in our State governments nor in our county governments. We are the geese that lay the golden eggs of taxes, and we are receiving what is begrudgingly handed out to us. We cannot turn around without the consent of a State legislature, and that condition, friends, will not change until those of you who live in these industrial communities recognize the fact that while you think you are American citizens and have the same power that any other American citizen has, you are not as much an American citizens as you would be if you lived in a rural district.

We are asking for just a little bit of this democracy we hear so much about for the communities in which the great majority of the people live. This problem, the problem of traffic control, the problem of preventing further disease and crime in the slum districts, must be done at the local levels.

I close with making the appeal that if you will make it possible for the communities of America to get the wherewithal to get the tools, we will do the job. [*Applause.*]

Chairman Fleming. Thank you, Mayor Welsh.

I ought to forewarn the next speaker, who represents the Council of State Governments, that we have designs on him and his gubernatorial election. This Conference already has produced home notable results, although they remain to be translated into action.

Following the President's Conference on Highway Safety last year, we turned to the Governors of the States for further help, and we were not disappointed. We asked them to hold their own statewide conferences paralleling the President's Conference in order to enlist the support of

their citizens and to hand-tailor the Action Program to meet of their own commonwealth. They have very generously complied, and we are going to ask for the same kind of assistance in this great movement to save lives and property from fire.

I have the honor of introducing the Honorable Clarence W. Meadows, Governor of the State of West Virginia. [*Applause.*]

Hon. Clarence W. Meadows. My fellow American citizens: I am certain I voice the sentiment of each of you, and as a Governor, that of the Chief Executives of every State in the Union, by paying tribute, first of all, to the President, for his foresight and wisdom in calling this most timely conference. The justification for such is now, more than ever before, apparent to you who have been attending these sessions, and therein lies a responsibility to which I shall refer later.

“So you want to be a fireman?” This question, posed by my mother many years ago as our family stood on the open porch of our home in the small town where I lived, and for the greater part of a memorable night watched the entire business section of that community burn to the ground, made an indelible impression upon my memory.

Was there ever a boy who did not want to be a fireman? That urge seizes most of us in our youth and never quite leaves – no matter how old we may grow. There is something wrong with almost any American who does not possess a secret desire to don the coat and boots and hat of a fireman and go charging down the street to the scene of a conflagration.

A little silly perhaps, but nevertheless, we come by it quite honestly for fire and mankind are closely associated, and have been since this natural phenomenon first enabled man to cope with the wild beasts which menaced his primitive life and its usefulness has been constantly an important part of his progress throughout the ages. Because of his capacity for controlling this phenomenal force in the world about him, mankind succeeded in making his food more palatable, his life more generally comfortable, and he has been able to pass the desolate frontiers which walled in his primitive environment and to occupy regions which must have otherwise remained perpetually uninhabited.

Fire has given to man the refinement of minerals, and generally, an increased utilization of the natural deposits of the bountiful earth in the furtherance of his multifarious needs. The experience with fire which man thus acquired through the ages he has definitely reflected in his superstitions, his religion and his philosophy; and through symbol and metaphor, it has enriched the language with which he strives to give expression to his sentiments.

Therefore, it becomes more understandable why men rush to a fire, not to do anything about it particularly, but just to watch and see what happens.

With the ever increasing usefulness of fire to mankind in making his life more liveable, his wealth greater, and his vision more farsighted through the years, the ingenuity of the human mind, our desire for living together, and the consequent economic and social problems attendant therewith has likewise increased the destructiveness of the very thing which is so beneficial, to

the point where we might well say that the devastating ability of this creation may now outrank the usefulness thereof.

Since you have been here, I am certain you have been assailed from all sides with facts and figures, which perhaps not only astound you, but which I am certain have brought the conviction that something must be done to curtail the annual destruction to life and property directly attributable to fire. I will not burden you with statistics, but when I am told that for the month of March the fire loss was greater than the loss in any previous month since April 1906, when the great San Francisco fire occurred, I must ask you to do something about it. Then with the terrible disaster at Texas City, I have not the slightest doubt but the month of April will be even worse than the month of March. So, with the toll of destruction steadily mounting by such leaps and bounds, it appears beyond contradiction that today is a day for action – emergency action, if you please!

I said a moment ago that we Americans run to a fire to do nothing about it but just to watch and see what happens. My fellow Americans, that is literally just what we have been doing through the years – and nothing more. We can stand on the sidewalk, watch a great building or somebody's little home burn – we can shout instructions to the firemen as to what they should do, and just how they should put it out – but that is about as far as our advice or efforts have ever gone. So you want to be a fireman, do you? If so, you'll have to do better than that.

I think I would speak the mind of so many public officials and just ordinary citizens throughout this land by repeating what I am sure was said years ago back in my home town shortly before the fire I spoke of occurred, when it was said, after buying some of the firefighting equipment then available – “Well, we have the problem of fire whipped now.” Too many people – too many public officials – too many cities place their trust in a fire engine – in a good fire department – and these they should have – but no horse was ever saved by locking the barn door after he was gone, and a fire that has started is definitely much harder to put out than one which never gets started. The real basic answer to this whole problem, as you must undoubtedly realize by now, if never before, is prevention – again let me say it – Prevention! The people of this Nation must awaken to the fact that the public good and welfare require a new set of rules in construction, cleanliness and carefulness. Law making bodies and public officials must assume their just responsibility in setting up building codes, fire prevention methods, fire protection devices, and after having placed such upon the statute books, enforcing the same without fear or favor. The untold thousands of lives and billions of dollars worth of property which have been untimely and most horrifyingly caught up in a swirl of flames and smoke may well be charged to the officials who have winked at the requirements of a building code, safe wiring practices, rubbish disposal, and other things of like nature. Just as it might have been you or me, or perhaps it was John Doe, who flicked a lighted cigarette into a convenient corner; or who left the matches where the children might play with them; or who neglected to turn off the furnace and lit a match to see whether or not his suspicions were correct – yes, we are all guilty to some degree, and that guilt will continue to pile upon each and every citizen in this great nation until we resolutely determine that we will do something besides watch the fires burn.

Perhaps I can turn an even more somber page – at least one which makes me stop and think – think, that is, for the future. Twice within a quarter of a century, we had to arouse ourselves

reluctantly, of course, and turn from our quiet, rather careless ways of peace, to carry fire and sword against peoples arrayed against us and menacing our very existence. Sickening though the thought may be, we would be foolish beyond all past performances to close our eyes to the possibility of another such occurrence. Certainly the general chaotic condition of the world today constitutes a most compelling motive for our recognition of such an unfortunate eventuality.

Since the ancients first found fire useful in combating their enemies, and learned to hurl flaming arrows into the crude fortresses of their foes in battle, mankind has devoted itself more and ever more assiduously to perfecting the weapons of incendiary destruction. This perfection – this development of the diabolical art of concentrating fire in one form or another against an enemy certainly reached its most advanced and deadly exposition in the last global conflict – a war which itself is best comprehended when conceived as a world aflame – crowned by a gigantic pillar of smoke, steam, and flame mushrooming miles up into the air above the blast of atomic energy which just left everything below a field of seared, twisted death and destruction.

Against a repetition of this, we have dedicated our lives and our treasure. The best mind of this Nation, in magnificent disregard of our normal partisan political alignments, are working day and night with the tremendous task of evolving with our allies some means of keeping the word at peace. But even in our commitment to this policy, which is of more fundamental importance to the human race than any other problem which history records, we cannot afford to blind ourselves to the fact that in this unpredictable age, erstwhile allies may overnight become mortal enemies, and that any relaxation of vigilance will inexorably imperil our very existence.

Military leaders and other experts who chronicle the lessons of war and utilize them in the evolution of engines or devices for our protection in any future conflict, solemnly assure us that any assault which may come upon us will most certainly be aimed at the destruction, in a matter of minutes, perhaps, of our greatest center of population, which are also our points of heaviest industrial concentrations. Such an assault we may most certainly anticipate would thrust upon us immediately a battle against fire hardly within our capacity to imagine. Protection against the spread of fire and the control of fire once started would suddenly become the most deadly important task in the way of our survival that perhaps we would ever face. Appalled as we are now by a contemplation of the power of fire to destroy human life and property in a nation at peace, and determined as we should be to mitigate this destruction through a general program of public education, forward-looking laws and strict law enforcement for preventive measures, we can well stand aghast at the prospect which might some day be ours if we should become the target in a renewal of global war waged by powers to whom the fantastic weapons of the immediate past may then be obsolete.

From here on, the problem is ours. Our President has issued the order – it is the duty of every American – individually, officially, and cooperatively – to carry out the command. Will you do it? I believe you will.

As one of the 48 Governors, it will be my high privilege to lay before the Executive Committee of the Governors' Council, which meets in Salt Lake City this coming July, the full recommendations of this Conference, at which time I confidently expect such to be placed on the

agenda for discussion and action on the part of the Governors' Conference itself. I not only anticipate favorable action thereon, but I well know that each of my fellow governors shall not only be highly aware of this matter, but will gladly embrace any workable and worthwhile program, and put it into effect on a State level without delay. Each of you in your respective capacities, whatever they may be, will, I am sure, carry back to your people and to your organizations the same message as shall I, and will there find same hearty reception beyond doubt.

Your Conference can be, and I know will be, a landmark along the great road which has and will continue to lead America and the American people to a better and fuller life. By your action taken here, there will in the years that lie ahead be untold thousands of men, women, and children who will have been spared the torture and horror of death by fire and the general prosperity of all lifted by the savings of the countless millions of dollars of property which have heretofore fed the flames of wanton disregard and destruction.

Chairman Fleming. Thank you, Governor. What you propose to do is certainly all and more than we could possibly hope to ask for.

Before we part, I wish to thank all of you, for the President and for myself, for your attendance upon this Conference and for the invaluable help you have given us with your counsel and your advice. As we depart from this auditorium and go our separate ways to our homes, we take with us a program for future action that has been forged upon the anvil of sound experience by the best intelligence in the fire safety field that we could find.

This has been a 3-day Conference, but we must all be deeply aware that to bring that program to life, to implement it in every town and city of the country, it is going to be no 3-day task. It will call for our best efforts 365 days of the year. We have enlisted not for a brief skirmish, but for the whole campaign. In winning that campaign we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that we are saving lives and putting an end to the wanton destruction of our Nation's resources.

Again, I thank you for your assistance and for the consideration you have given your General Chairman. I want to particularly thank the chairmen and members of our committees, the secretaries who have labored long and earnestly, the consultants and staff who helped them, and particularly Mr. Bruce Bielaski, who has done so much to make this Conference a success. [Applause.]

We will now stand up and hear the Star Spangled Banner; then the Conference will be adjourned.

{The assemblage stood for the National Anthem.}

{The Conference adjourned at 12:15 P.M.}

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