

one of the ways in which we can make lighter the heavy burden left by the war losses and war debts. These losses and debt obligations can be made good only by the savings of the people, and further destruction of capital should be reduced to a minimum. He referred to our unenviable position at the top of the list of nations as regards fire losses, and commended the work done by the association.

President's Address

The president, Mr. F. J. T. Stewart, of New York, then gave his address, which was, in part, as follows:—

"After four successive annual meetings within a period during which most of the world has been at war, it is a great satisfaction to feel that, in coming together on this occasion, we can plan for the future full of hope that peace will reign indefinitely. It may be, however, too much to expect, that we will be without enemies. In the terms of the international diplomat, it may not be a war of nations, but we may depend upon an indefinite conflict with our neighborly enemy 'fire.' This characterization of fire is found in the address of former president W. H. Merrill, who, after summarizing the life and property loss incident to a series of conflagrations in the preceding fifteen years, added: 'Had these twenty thousand persons been killed in fighting for their country rather than simply for their lives, their fame would be everlasting. Had these two billions of property value been wiped out by the invasion of a foreign foe, the call for defence would meet with a universal response.'

"All this may rightfully be said of the past four years, and, in addition, it may now be recorded that the response to the call for defence was so universal that the importance of fire prevention as a war measure gained a general recognition far beyond any we have been able to claim for it as a conservation measure in time of peace. We are encouraged, however, to believe that one of the beneficial results of the war will be a lasting realization of the national importance of conserving life and property against loss by fire.

"Many of our members, notably the National Board of Fire Underwriters, aided the various departments of the government in an organized effort to prevent fires due to carelessness or design which might destroy munitions of war. In this connection, the fire prevention section of the War Industries Board, whose working force was almost exclusively composed of National Fire Protection Association members, rendered a notable service. The war work of many of our members, especially among the architectural and engineering professions, was a prominent feature, and the importance of fire prevention was kept in the foreground in matters pertaining to construction and planning.

"The various standards and regulations of the association for safeguarding against fire, which are already widely used on this continent, found even a broader scope of application during the war. I have always felt that members of this association could rightly take pride in the many excellent standards which have been prepared over a period of nearly twenty-five years. This feeling has been fully justified recently in connection with the discussions of plans for an American engineering standards organization. On several of these occasions, the fact was favorably commented upon, that the National Fire Protection Association is unique in the field of standard making, being as it is an association of associations organized to bring together all interested talent in the preparation of fire prevention standards or codes.

"You will no doubt be interested in further information regarding the plans for an American standards organization, to which reference has just been made. Most of you, perhaps, know of the American engineering standards committee, which was formed by joint action of five national engineering societies (American Society of Civil Engineers, American Institute of Mining Engineers, American Society of Mechanical Engineers, American Institute of Electrical Engineers and the American Society for Testing Materials, called the 'Founders Societies.') Its purpose is to provide machinery for the development of engineering and industrial standards, by the operation of which duplication is avoided, and co-operation between all interested organizations and

government departments secured. It was expected that a standard or group of standards thus developed would be acceptable to all concerned, and therefore become a truly 'American Standard.' Moreover, it was felt that as international standardization develops, there will be need for an authoritative national body to deal with the corresponding foreign bodies. National engineering standards committees are said to be already in operation in England, Canada, France and Holland; others will probably be organized in the near future.

"It is now proposed to broaden the scope of the work and membership of the American engineering standards committee, as the outcome of a conference held at the United States Bureau of Standards, at Washington, on January 15th of this year, to consider methods of procedure to be followed in the preparation of safety codes. The present intention is to reorganize it into an association of associations in some respects similar to our own organization. Briefly stated, the aim of the new organization will be to co-ordinate the work of standard-making, particularly with reference to new standards, and in cases where no one organization is obviously best qualified or sufficiently interested to act as sponsor body and provide for a committee to prosecute the work. The standards association will be interested chiefly in knowing that such working committees are sufficiently representative of the interests most concerned with the subject under consideration. It is not proposed to review in detail a finished standard worked out by such a committee and approved by a sponsor body.

"It will, therefore, be seen that it is not the intention of the standards association to do any actual work of standard making, nor to interfere with the scope and influence of existing bodies such as our own which already are engaged in such work. In the beginning it is expected that any existing standard if presented by the organization which prepared it, will be adopted as an American standard. We are given to understand that the preparation and promulgation of fire prevention standards will be expected to continue as before, except that an opportunity will be afforded, if desired, to secure additional backing by having them designated as American standards by the new organization.

"It is significant that we should be holding our annual meeting in Canada just at this time, while we are talking and thinking so much about national and international standards. In the matter of fire prevention standards, it is perhaps safe to say that Canada and the United States are already practically in harmony and our co-operation is becoming closer and more comprehensive each year. As far as these two countries are concerned, we, therefore, seem to have anticipated in fire prevention matters, the present movement looking eventually to the establishment of international standards of all kinds.

"The war has resulted in stimulating standardization work in general, and we may expect an unusual activity of this nature in the future. As the importance of standardization work becomes increasingly prominent, our responsibility for the numerous fire prevention standards already promulgated will be proportionately greater. It will be necessary for the chairman of our special committees to keep even more closely in touch with each development affecting their subject, and promptly change our standards when found necessary to keep them in step with the state of the art.

"So much for fire prevention standards and standardization in general. Our next great concern, which logically follows the possession of standards, is how to utilize them to best advantage. While we, no doubt, all agree that a certain amount of fire prevention legislation is important, I am sure we cannot hope for pronounced success in reducing the fire waste in the North American continent, unless we can personally reach and interest the individual in some manner. Apparently, good headway has been made lately by appeals to the patriotic duty of the individual, to minimize waste by fire during the war. I think the response to that appeal was greater than we realize and is accountable for the fact that the fire loss was not radically greater than it was during the period of the war. The persistence of the newspapers in