

FIRE PREVENTION ORGANIZATION

An Address Delivered Before the Convention of Fire Chiefs at Calgary, Alta., August 19th to 22nd

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I HAVE always had great faith in fire prevention, or what may be termed "carefulness," and with this in mind, when appointed chief, I immediately set to work and drafted a few amendments to our local fire prevention by-laws which were passed by our city council. One was that the use of iron receptacles for the destruction of all refuse in the fire limits, was not to be left burning after business hours. I am pleased to say that we have not had one fire in two years caused by burning refuse being left to blow in fences and buildings and set fire to same as formerly. Now we have the by-law it is up to the fire department to see that this receptacle is purchased and kept in proper condition for use at all times. This was followed by an inspection of all buildings and basements in the fire limits and the conditions I found things in, with regard to fire prevention, were comparatively ridiculous. In several cases it was almost impossible to go through some of the basements because of piles of loose paper, rags, boxes and ashes.

Inspection brought about a great clean-up of all such places and I also wish to state that we inspected all chimneys, furnaces and furnace pipes. This kept the tinsmiths going for a few days. We also suggested three new furnaces, to replace the old ones, which were installed in December. In every case, where a place was found in a very defective state, it as followed up every two or three days until these conditions were remedied. At this point we started to reduce the number of fires, when the business men began to realize that our intentions were good along these lines, and in the spring of 1918 we arranged with the editor of our local paper to assist us in our efforts to prevent fires. The editor, being a popular citizen, and representing an influential paper, rendered us great assistance, inasmuch as he permitted the free use of a portion of its columns in which to suggest certain things in the way of fire prevention to the public, which we effected each week. In this way we brought about a feeling of carefulness in every factory, store and private dwelling, and by August, 1918, we had things improving very nicely. When the insurance underwriters raised our rates, this offset things for a while, but in a few days our convention was held in Toronto and a fire prevention bureau formed. This was followed by the organization of the Ontario Fire Prevention League, and with the strong support of these two organizations, working to the one objective, and being properly advertised throughout the country, and the setting of one particular day, October 9, for fire prevention day, gave us the exact assistance we required. The people commenced to realize that it was not a local campaign, but one of great strength and far-reaching in its effects. To start the thing moving for this big clean-up day, October 9th, we used the press, as I have previously stated. The matter was taken up with our city council, board of trade, and school board, and I beg to say that they rendered us great assistance to get things going.

Fire Prevention Publicity

On October 7th, we had 4,000 dodgers printed, announcing that there was to be a big street parade at 8.30 p.m., consisting of bands and the fire-fighting apparatus, also that the firemen would give free exhibitions on the street, after which they were addressed by the mayor, councilmen and other citizens on "Fire Prevention." These dodgers were distributed by boys to every employee coming from the factories and all the business men of the city. I must admit that in this way the people seemed to grasp the real meaning of fire prevention, and on October 9th, this was quite evident by the way the town was improved in appearance. In November, 1918, we had our general inspection of all buildings in the fire limits and, to our amazement, we found every-

thing in first-class condition and we know that these conditions still prevail, as we give them an unexpected call every week. I here must admit that our great success this summer, in the way of fire prevention, has been brought about through our local league. The following is a copy of the agreement the citizens have signed:—

"We, the undersigned, hereby agree to become members of the Oshawa Branch of the Ontario Fire Prevention League, and in so doing promise to live up to the requirements of said league in every respect. It will be our duty to offer every assistance in our power to protect Oshawa properties against fire. This, we agree to do, first—by placing our own property in as near a fireproof state as possible, and, secondly—by assisting our neighbors to do likewise, and we agree to report any one neglecting to perform the above duties in the way of fire protection."

I feel sure that they are all living up to it. I can only judge the good work it is doing by the reduction of fires to one-third of what they were in 1917, and the reports which the fire department receive from members every few days informing them that some individual is not living up to the requirements of the league. All reports from members are kept strictly confidential and the wrongdoer wonders why we get wise to what is going on, so quickly.

Organization

The organization as we have it consists of the fire department, board of trade and school board, backed up by our city council and public-spirited citizens.

I may say that the power of suggestion to the public on fire prevention lies within the walls of our association. What I mean by this is that the fire chief makes a real study of fire fighting and fire prevention, which is not thought of by the average individual and in this way as an organization possessing this great power and knowledge which will enable its members to pass it on, through the local fire departments, to the citizens of our country. We must expect great results in the future along the lines of fire prevention.

In my humble opinion to accomplish what we are working for, there should be the closest co-operation possible between our association and the fire marshal. With this we can accomplish much. I admit that we have had great success in the fire prevention movement, but not to the extension that we have forgotten our duty as a fire department, inasmuch as we have our fire drill every two weeks, and in April we added to our equipment one 40 horse-power motor truck, which will accommodate 1,100 feet of hose, 6 men, equipped with ladders, axes, bars, lanterns, play pipes and chemicals. With them we possess a fair feeling of preparedness.

Electric Wiring

I feel that I am in a position to speak in this respect with more or less authority, owing to the fact that I have been engaged in this business for many years and am a practical man. I have grown up to this line of work and realize the great importance of the proper installation of all electrical appliances and wiring of all kinds, also the great danger of fire if the proper installations are neglected. I am an electrical contractor and I must say that the Hydro-Electric inspection department of Ontario is bringing about great changes in the way of fire prevention along these lines with greater safety to the public and the users of electricity. There was a suggestion made by Chief Ten Eyck, of the Hamilton fire department, in his address of last year, when he suggested the licensing of all electricians. I must say that this suggestion should receive the hearty support of every member of this association. By making all electricians pass an examination and take out a certificate, would do away with the so-called electrician, or commonly known to the legitimate contractor, as a "piker." This, in time, would give the inspection department greater assistance and render less trouble for the inspectors, which I believe would be greatly appreciated by them, and, at the same time, render better and safer service to the public. This, in my opinion, is a very important question worthy of immediate attention, and some action which would remedy all such conditions.