

Fire Departments Do Service For Humanity

Stacy W. Wade, Speaking At Annual Fireman's Convention At Durham Expresses Wish That These Departments Might Be Properly Supported

Durham, August 8.—"Linked with the spread of the teaching of Christianity and the dissipation of disease there should be the same reverence for and support of any movement which has for its objective the prevention or extinguishment of fire, for it is service to humanity that is holy in its purpose and wholesome in its effect," declared Insurance Commissioner Stacy W. Wade in addressing the annual convention of the North Carolina Fireman's Association here Tuesday.

"If the same enthusiastic support were given our fire departments as is lavished upon our baseball clubs, tennis tournaments, football games, etc.," he continued, "I cannot but feel that our fire record in this State would tell a different story. It must be admitted that so far as our limited equipment permits and funds available we have fire fighting facilities in North Carolina that cannot be surpassed, but in a large number of towns this protection is wholly lacking, while in nearly all it is inadequate."

The motorization of fire fighting trucks with its aerial trucks has worked wonderful changes in fire fighting tactics, Mr. Wade asserted, making them a thousand per cent more efficient, but at the same time increasing "beyond the power of imagination the perils to which firemen are constantly exposed."

Hazards Increased

"The tendency to build in the air instead of upon the ground has increased the hazards of your profession by making the point of attack more inaccessible," he said, "while the ever increasing congestion in traffic also contributes its portions of risk. It was a cause for general rejoicing when so many of our towns and cities abandoned the volunteer system and provided for a paid fire department, but I have been disappointed that this plan has not been generally adopted throughout the State, for only by recognizing the fire department as an integral part of city government and providing by suitable appropriation for its maintenance can efficiency be achieved. Of the 273 towns in our State having a population in excess of 500 people there are only 105 towns provided with fire fighting equipment amounting to \$10,000, which means that practically 168 towns of 500 and over are without fire protection altogether. The most that you can do of course is to endeavor to impress upon your city authorities the real function and importance of a fire department, and to enlist their aid in securing public recognition and proper support of such a department—as can cope not only with the small or isolated fire, but which is in a position to meet any emergency that might arise, for it is the extraordinary fire that entails the heaviest loss, the fire that occurs in an unusual way, under adverse circumstances and threatens a conflagration—such a fire as resulted in the lamentable conflagration in New Bern."

The Lesson of New Bern

It may have been, and perhaps was impossible to prevent the spread of this fire and the necessary demolition of numerous buildings untouched by the flames, but it is not too much to surmise that closer attention on the part of the city officials toward fully equipping their department and developing them into an efficient unit as a whole would have eliminated much lost motion and saved valuable time, which often represents the difference between a fire of inconsequence and a general disaster. This furnished the first conflagration in the history of our State, and while that in itself is a cause for pride in the efficiency of our fire departments it should convey a special lesson to every city and town, looking to a closer organization in their fire department and more ample provision for adequate equipment, for there is hardly a city in our State that can boast of fire protection in keeping with the increase of its population and business area.

"Our State as a whole has an enviable record compared with the National average, our fire loss per capita being \$2.43 against \$4.75 throughout the nation, yet it is anything but reassuring to reflect that we have more towns in North Carolina with a fire loss in excess of \$5.00 per capita than any other State in the Union with the exception of New York, and while I am encouraging in every way possible the organization of fire departments in smaller towns the record of our

Will Carry Work To the Teachers

District Meetings Arranged for Those Unable to Attend State Meeting

Raleigh, August 8.—"The object of these district meetings, the dates and places which were arranged by

larger cities indicate that the enlargement of their fire fighting equipment is imperative.

"Figures are not usually interesting but I must ask your indulgence to lay before you the loss ratio of some of our most important towns, figures compiled from reliable reports and which place the responsibility upon our city officials and fire departments:

Here's Elizabeth City
 "Fire loss per capita: Salisbury, .67; Elizabeth City .98; Greensboro, \$1.09; Rocky Mount, 3.03; Winston Salem, 3.55; Asheville \$4.80; Durham 5.35; High Point 5.59; Raleigh 6.42; Wilmington 7.56; Charlotte, 10.48; Fayetteville 10.79; Henderson, 19.90; Goldsboro, 33.14; Wilson 35.27; Kinston 37.00; New Bern 166.89.

"There is a very close relation between the aim of the organized fire department and fire prevention work. The proverbial ounce of prevention, never had a higher value than when applied to the prevention of fires, and the effective administration of the fire marshal law as well as the building and inspection law, both of which are aimed at reduction in fire waste, is to a large extent dependent upon co-operation and interest of the local fire department. Every fire, however insignificant, if carefully analyzed would no doubt disclose to the firemen some defect in construction or in maintenance premises which if remedied would prevent a recurrence of a similar fire."

Fire Prevention

Mr. Wade said the Insurance Department is now engaged in the inspection of every school building in the State with a view of removing the fire and panic hazard. Out of the total number of less than 100 already inspected, he said, more than 60 per cent were found defective in construction, condemned by the department and plans furnished for revised construction.

"I feel highly gratified at the progress we have made," said the Commissioner in conclusion, "but lest our optimism overshadow our duty let us emphasize the need for more fire departments, for more closely organized fire departments, for municipal recognition as a part of city government. Let us demand greater public sympathy and support. Let us pay closer attention to inspections, especially in the business area of our towns for therein lies the secret of our high loss ratio, and in it all let us realize that the most effective fire protection is that directed at fire prevention."

the Executive Committee of the State Teachers' Association last Friday, is to carry the work of the Association to the teachers, who do not ordinarily have the opportunity to attend the State meeting," declared Miss Elizabeth Kelly, president of the association today. "For that reason," she explained, "we are asking all city and county superintendents to urge their teachers to attend these meetings."

The first of the district meetings will be held in Asheville, for the Western mountain counties, on September 21 and 22. The second meeting will be held at Greensboro on October 5 and 6, the third in

Charlotte on October 19 and 20, the fourth at Raleigh on November 2 and 3, the fifth in Greenville on November 16 and 17 and the last one in Wilmington November 30 and December 3.

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