

My friends, while we are gathered here today, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the gallant men of the Fire Service. In the words of a great American, it is above our poor power to add or detract from the services these men give. It is rather for us to soberly dedicate ourselves to the humanitarian principles which are the guide posts of these men.

As I stand before you, it is my conviction that there is no division of American life which does not stand indicted for the many tragedies which are this day occurring. American business, which gave this Nation world supremacy commercially, stands indicted for its lack of interest for preserving human life, to say nothing of their own business enterprises. Public officials stand indicted for their whimsical conception of fire protection and fire prevention and also for their political meddling at the wrong time. Social agencies stand indicted for not throwing the whole weight of organized society into the fight. Our School System stands indicted for its failure to introduce fire protection education into the curriculum. We all stand indicted and only an enlightened leadership will remove the indictment; a leadership which removes all obstacles and recognizes no limitations; a leadership that is relentless in its attack upon carelessness. That leadership must come from our ranks. The American people have a right to expect that leadership and to the extent that we fail to fulfill these expectations, will we be shirking our responsibility. No one has yet been able to convince me that the American people refuse to recognize the effect of the many human tragedies daily happening or that the business man refuses to believe what his eyes see. To argue thus is to say we are a barbaric nation, oblivious to the

Tribute
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principles of humanitarianism and simple economic facts. We are an enlightened nation. We have become pre-eminent thru a spirit of co-operation as best demonstrated in our community life. If these thoughts are properly presented, people will pause and think and, having done so, the effect of our losses from fire and carelessness will be evident. Perhaps we have concentrated too greatly on astronomical figures which, though factual, are most uninteresting.

Economic Losses
Negligence
Carelessness
We may lose sight of the moral as well as the economic lessons resulting from our fire losses. What sane person is not affected by death in the afternoon on our busy highways, or at night in the charred ruins of a family home? We have criminal statutes dealing with the people who break our laws but I ask you, what is the difference between the criminal who commits a crime with intent, and the person who takes a life thru negligence? Business destroyed reaches into every avenue of life and community and every laboring man, every professional man and every creditor is affected. If we accept the accusation of the selfishness of the American way of life, then the field is ripe for harvest because we all are the principal losers.

Service
I once heard a speech entitled, "The Essence of Service," and the base of the remarks in the talk was "Why should a man join the Fire Service and make it his life work?" What does it take? The question was answered by the Chief of a small town fire department in Kansas who said, "Whatever it is that will get me out of bed at two o'clock in the morning, when it is storming outside, and get me into my clothes to go out and help somebody whom I know can no longer help himself, that is what it takes."

That leads me to think that WHATEVER IT IS must be a human characteristic and, if that man was the type that his answer indicated, we are led to believe that human characteristics is the bottom principle of the man in the fire service of this and every other Nation.

From the things that have happened recently and the responsibilities which have been placed upon these men the world over, and the way they have met these responsibilities, I am sure we can safely take this as our premise: - That 'WHATEVER IT IS' is the essence back of the fire service, and That essence is the essence of service.

*70 is a good
free fighter*
*Physical
Brains
Quality
of
service*
If it was a human characteristic, let us see what sort of thing it might have been! - It could not have been a physical thing because that man was no example of physical perfection; and were it a physical characteristic, our athletes would be our only source of recruits for the fire service. However, it does take physical ability to exercise that characteristic to the fullest extent. I do not think it is altogether a mental characteristic. If that, what a wonderful opening for a college professor! It takes more than just brains to make a firefighter. It takes more than just physical ability to handle that job. If it is not physical and not mental, WHAT IS IT ANYHOW? I am led to believe that whatever that is, is akin to spirituality itself.

Around 300 B.C., Dionysius, "the Tyrant of Syracuse", had a henchman named Damocles who repeatedly envied the privilege, the prestige and the luxury which accompany a position of power. Dionysius knew from experience that such a post is not always a bed of roses. And to put that idea across to his aide, he staged

a banquet for him one night at which Damocles, in the gilded seat of honor, was overwhelmed by the array of luxuries flanking him on every side. Gazing speechless at the grandeur of it all, he chanced to look up at the ceiling of the ornate banquet hall - and his spine froze. For a few feet above his head, suspended on a single, slender thread, dangled a razor-sharp sword.

Damocles was delighted to surrender the seat of honor with all its glamour and its worries. And ever since then, "the Sword of Damocles" has been an accepted term to describe the presence of some imminent disaster which, sooner or later, is bound to fall.

Threat of Fire
Today, nobody appreciates this ancient legend better than the Chief of every Fire Department. His "Sword of Damocles" is that ever-present threat - the Conflagration. No matter how modern his city; how big his department; how well-trained his personnel; that imminent disaster of the sweeping fire hangs over his head night and day, suspended on the slender thread of Luck.

Real building methods
In spite of our progress in methods of building construction, fire protection devices and firefighting methods in this country, it is still true that, with a given combination of circumstances and wind and weather, and two or more fires breaking out in a city at one time, a conflagration of sizeable proportions could occur in practically any city or town in the United States.

City Planning
Until we plan our cities differently, even with all the efforts that have been made toward fire prevention, the possibilities of sweeping fires must always be faced. The business man or city official may say, "What on earth is there to burn? Everything here is of fire-proof construction." Or the fire chief may brag of the

low fire loss and the fact that he is operating his department with a reduced personnel. There is only one answer to this one and that is - "A lucky chief in a lucky town."

It is our hope and prayer in 1948 that those of faint heart among us will be inspired to greater efforts in combatting all influences tending to delay the inevitable return of the normal American way of living. In support of this optimism, let us remember that fewer than 7 of every 100 people in the world live in the United States. Yet we have 35 percent of all the railroads; 45 percent of all the radios; 50 percent of the telephones and 70 percent of the automobiles. We use 56 percent of all the silk; 59 percent of the petroleum; 50 percent of the rubber; 53 percent of the coffee; 21 percent of the sugar, and we have two-thirds of the banking resources of the world. Quite a country we live in, isn't it? Can the sacrifice be too great to keep it that way?

✓ I can say with equal candor, when you meet a firefighter, whether he is a new recruit or one of the old boys, they have a kindred spirit - a fraternity among these men. They work together and seem to have a common bond of understanding. I hope we have that here, and I believe we do. It is clear to me that all these municipal services in Minnesota are working together with the same objective.

I am going to take the liberty today to bring up municipal government, about which I talked some time ago. I am going to be definite about my statements, as I was then. I read in the press, for example, words stating that the Government of the State of Minnesota was over in the State Capitol. It is a government of every county, township, school district and every other

district in the state, all added up together. When I read of being able to pay off huge sections of the state, and when I see what happens to municipalities, I say, let's not kid ourselves. The purpose of government is service to the people and to taxpayers. Pay for all levels of government - city, county, town and state level. It comes out of the same money. The State University is the master for its fountain head. Whatever power Saint Paul, Hibbing, Duluth or any other community has, it emanates by the wish of the Legislature or the constitutive provisions of the State of Minnesota. We are the agents or children in the family of the state.

When we talk about service in the State of Minnesota, we are not talking about what happens to one official on Capitol Hill. We are talking about what happens in every township in our State. That is the legalistic doctrine. This applies surely to people in the firefighting service.

With all due respect to our State Fire Marshal's office, you cannot put a fire out over there. You may be able to start one. I am not trying to be sarcastic about it. It is an important and integral part of the firefighting service in the State of Minnesota. There are about 1000 paid fire departments in the United States. There are some fifteen, sixteen or seventeen thousand volunteer departments in the United States. No matter how great I might say George Lockhart is, and I think he is a wonderful man, the backbone of the firefighting service in America is not in the big cities alone. It is out in the little villages, towns and little cities where they may have a paid fire chief. It is these people who have made possible the fire protection service of our nation. Those of you today who are in that capacity are the stalwart shoulders of the

public safety service.

I cannot tell you how to run your department. It is a matter of technique and administration. We recently had a Governor's Conference in the State of Minnesota. I am sorry it was not better attended. It should have been. We have got to get down to a matter of systematic training for the heads of departments; train personnel and the firefighters. There is only one place where that should be located and that is at the University of Minnesota where there are extensive firefighting facilities that can be used for fire training. The City of Minneapolis would deem it a high honor, and the City of Saint Paul likewise, because there is wonderful cooperation between these two cities. These two cities could open up their firefighting facilities to work with our University in the establishing of a kind of fire prevention and firefighting school that would be outstanding. That is where it ought to be and I hope the Fire Chiefs' Association of the State of Minnesota will make up their minds that is where it is going to be. There are billions of dollars in fire losses in America today. We are doing a good job but the public expects us to do a better one.

The Police Department makes money because it has to put traffic tags on cars and arrest people. The Fire Department is always looked upon as the great protector of homes, property and business interests. You have a glorious opportunity to get the public behind your program of expansion and development of education. I hope, out of this meeting, will come the kind of a committee and organization that will give the kind of program of which the State of Minnesota is truly worthy.

I hope our people who are part of this municipal service - fire prevention; firefighting and fire protection - will realize other services are also important.

The schools of Minneapolis are under financed. That is true all over America. Our problems are not unique to ourselves. That is a good lesson for Minneapolitans to learn. The large municipalities all over this nation are on the brink of bankruptcy. They found out they are bogged down with antiquated structures all broken down, and dilapidated machinery. Just as American business has to go thru a type of rebirth, so American municipalities have to go thru with it. The citizens of Minneapolis, Saint Paul, Hopkins, Robbinsdale, Willmar - yes, I guarantee there is not a city in Minnesota that cannot stand a little more help. These services are dedicated to the welfare of the public. This is a government of intimate personal service, dollar for dollar and person for person. In the local level, you get the most out of it. It is our job to sharpen the tools of democracy; to improve the tools of local government. We are close to our people. We live with them every hour of the day, every day of the year.

This fire department of ours, in this city or any other city, should have the most modern machinery to do the job. When I hear people criticize I say, "How would you like to go out and try to put out fires with antiquated equipment?" We have 1925 equipment trying to put out 1947 fires. The same thing is true of our street service; of our police department; of our health service. Keep this thought in mind that, more than being men in a profession, you are citizens. You have contacted the broad highway and the broad view and that means to be equally interested in all these phases of

municipal organization. Remember the relationship exists between your little town and my little town.

All over America, there were unheralded losses in fire. The Governor of this State called a Conference here because it happened all over the State of Minnesota. The State of Minnesota, the City of Minneapolis, the City of Saint Paul and all other cities and villages should see to it that it does not happen here again. There has been inadequate inspection. During the war, we had to use sub-standard construction.

I hope I have been able to bring you a few suggestions that may have helped. I surely want to leave you this thought. The privilege of being in public service is an honor - an honor of distinction. Many men realize success comes in the economic field or the professional field. There is no greater honor to men than to be able to serve their fellow men; to offer a helping hand and to be of service to someone else.

We have a job to do ourselves to make our governmental constitution vibrant, clean and efficient. If you are going to make this a better world, you are going to have to do it where we live - in our own hometown. If you are going to be able to put out the fires that consume the world, you are going to put them out in your block in your town. I am not only talking about actual fires. I am also talking about the fires of hate; of intolerance, that are consuming this globe.

I want to thank Chief Lockhart and the members of this organization for the invitation extended me to be present here today. I understand you have some sort of Committee which is going to gather on this training program. What a privilege it would be for the

cities of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, both of which border on the University, to say, "Here are the teachers, the facilities and the opportunity to make fire prevention and fire protection in the State of Minnesota the best in the nation." We can do it. We have the stuff to do it and I think we have the courage to try it.



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