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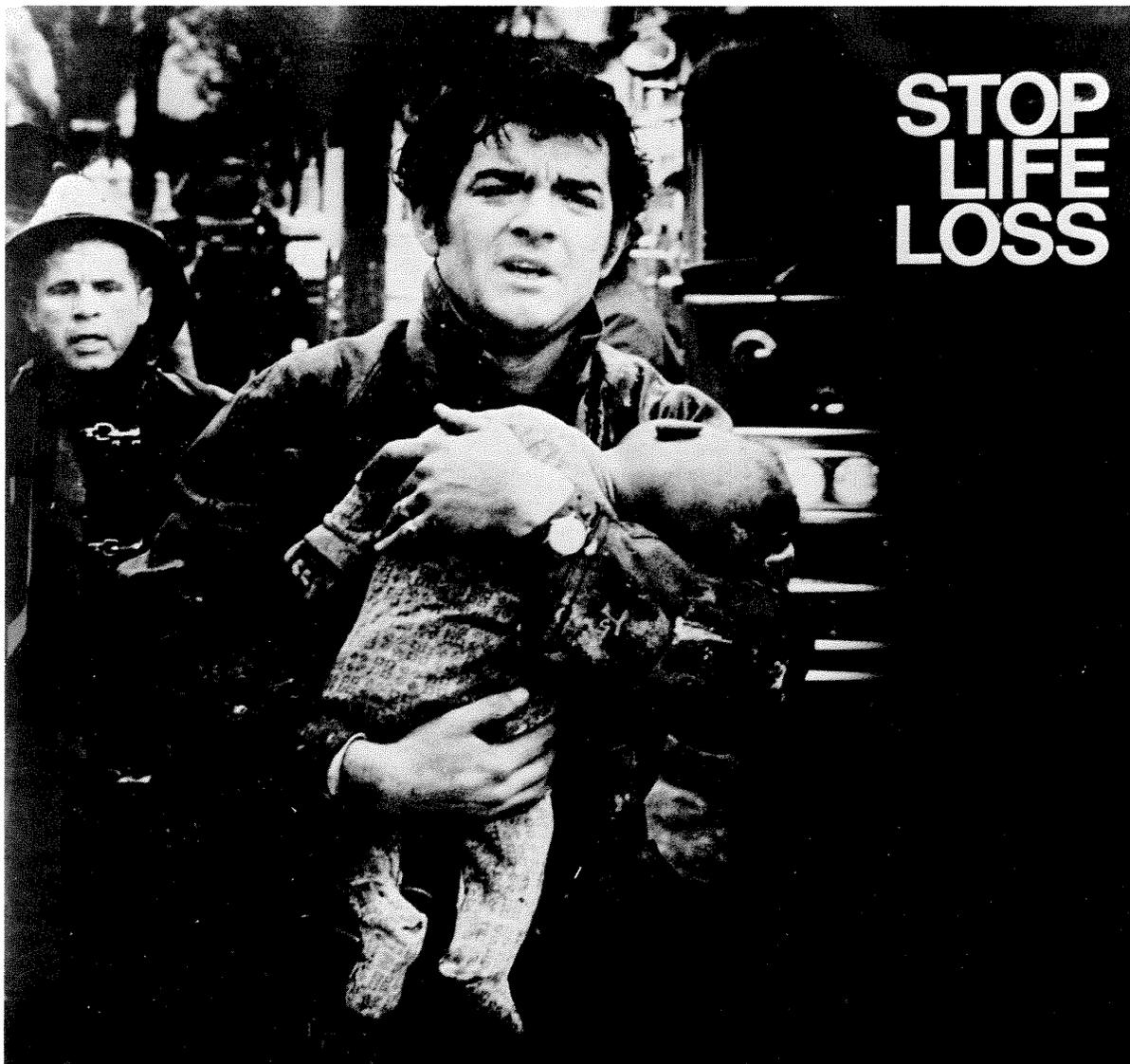
**NATIONAL COMMISSION
ON
FIRE PREVENTION AND
CONTROL**

PROGRESS REPORT

MARCH 15, 1972
WASHINGTON D.C.

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FOREWORD

Historical approaches to solving the destructive fire problem in America are characterized by a “non-system.” Emphasis is on putting out the fire rather than preventing it. Emphasis is on independent local, as well as nationwide, efforts to combat fire without setting priorities which take into account costs and benefits.

Many private and public groups including insurance, building materials industry, fire protection associations, professional designers, State and Federal organizations, have come forward and attempted to provide solutions. While significant contributions have been made, none reflected a coordinated system for reducing the fire loss. Human life loss and injury continue at a rate that is more severe than the polio epidemic in its worst years.¹

¹ National Safety Council statistics.

A change of approach is mandatory. How can we as a nation provide real, saleable benefits for “unfire?” Great effort is required. In the most advanced, complex, modern nation in the history of the world, fire technology, leadership and prevention efforts have not kept pace.

Significant contributions have been made to this Commission in this first six months in the form of ideas, systematic approaches and methods of improving leadership. We are seeing the real beginning of a coordinated approach to the reduction of fire losses and looking forward with enthusiasm to our final report in July, 1973.

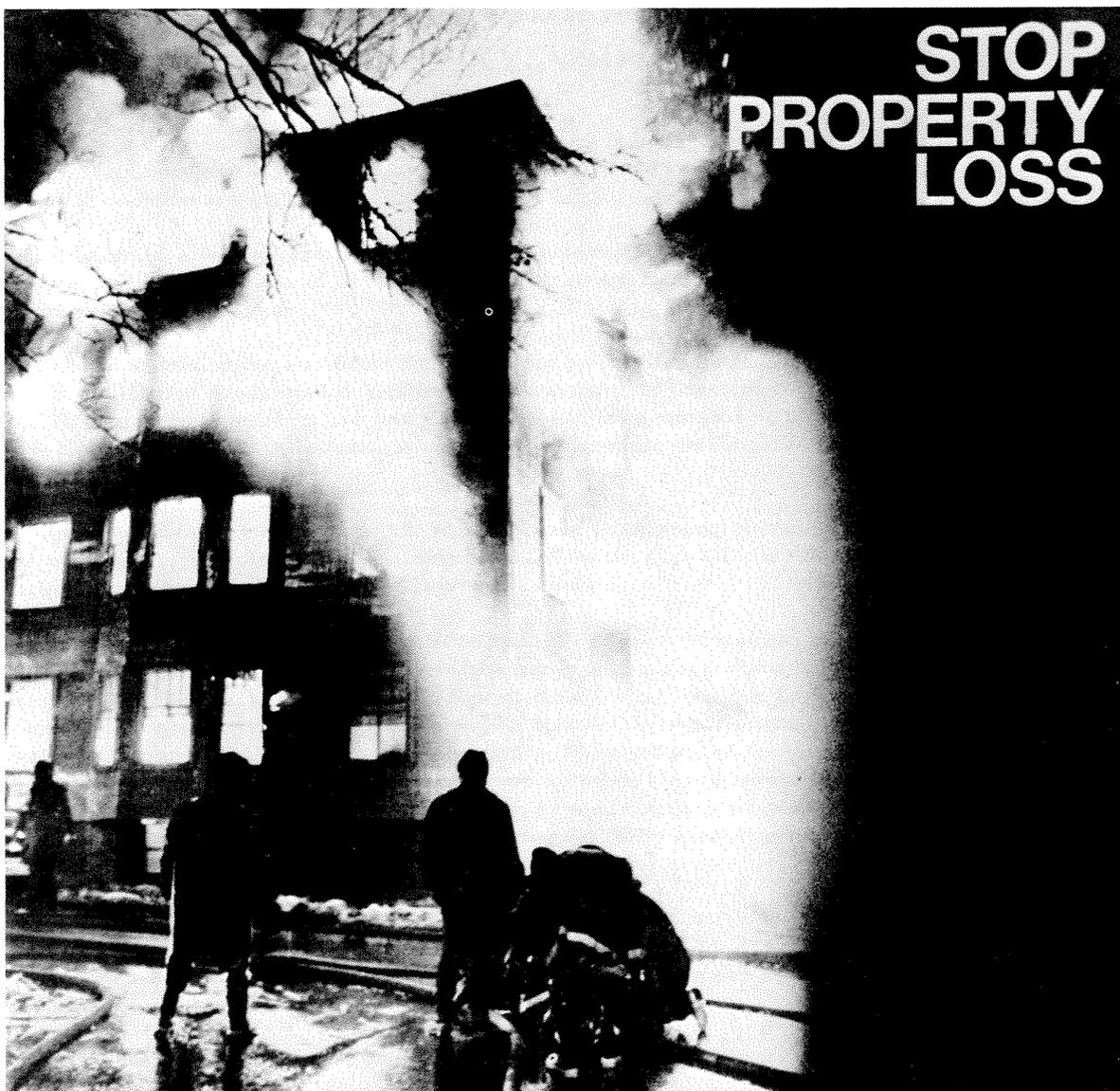
THE NATIONAL FIRE PROBLEM

In 1971, an estimated 12,200 Americans died and more than 330,000 were badly crippled or injured by fire; 210 firemen died on duty; and property loss exceeded \$2.8 billion.¹ Add to this the costs of fire insurance, fire fighting services and other indirect costs, and the cost of fire becomes over \$10 billion annually.

These fire losses are of the same magnitude as crime losses.² The fire problem is nationwide, and it indiscriminately affects everyone. The fire problem warrants the significant attention of the public and governments at all levels.

¹ Estimates from the National Fire Protection Association, the U.S. Public Health Service and the International Association of Fire Fighters.

² An estimated 10,000 homicide victims and direct and indirect costs of over \$11 billion according to the President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice’s “Task Force Report: Crime and Its Impact—An Assessment,” Washington, 1967.



SUMMARY

The National Commission on Fire Prevention and Control was formed by Public Law 90-259 to determine practicable and effective measures for reducing the destructive effects of fire in the United States.

Beginning work in July, 1971, the Commission has focused on identifying fire problems which cause the greatest loss of life and property as well as those which have great potential for causing loss. This it is doing through its own studies, soliciting position papers and conducting public hearings. The first of five planned hearings was held in February in the Senate Office Buildings, Washington, D.C.

A survey of 27,500 fire service organizations was made to gain a critical insight in municipal fire service organization and operations, an area of major concern to our nation's cities.

On the basis of these activities, the priorities facing the country are:

1. Fire prevention
2. Early detection and alarm
3. Personal protective equipment.
4. A national fire academy
5. Fire control equipment
6. National fire reporting and analysis
7. Research and development
8. Community relations
9. Federal financial participation.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMISSION: ITS HISTORY AND PURPOSE

The National Commission on Fire Prevention and Control is charged to do a two-year study of the nation's fire problems. The Commission in July, 1973, will submit to the President and the United States Congress a report of its findings and recommendations.

The Commission is making a comprehensive study and investigation to determine practical and effective measures to reduce the destructive loss of life and property caused by fire in cities, suburbs, communities and non-metropolitan areas of our country.

The United States Congress established the Commission by Title II of the Fire Research and Safety Act of 1968. Set up in the Johnson Administration, President Nixon appointed the Commission which was funded in Fiscal Year 1972. There are twenty members and four Congressional advisory members of the Commission. Commissioners include the Honorable Peter G. Peterson, Secretary of Commerce and the Honorable George Romney, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Congressional advisory members are U.S. Senator Warren G. Magnuson of Washington; U.S. Senator J. Caleb Boggs of Delaware; U.S. Representative George P. Miller for the Eighth District in California; and U.S. Representative Jerry L. Pettis for the Thirty-Third District of California.

Richard E. Bland is Chairman of the Commission. Associate Professor of Engineering Research of the Institute for Science and Engineering of Pennsylvania State University in State College, Pennsylvania, Mr. Bland is also Special Assistant to the Director and Head of Operations of the Ordnance Research Laboratory at Pennsylvania State University. He is Assistant Fire Chief of the Borough of State College, Pennsylvania, a volunteer fire department. W. Howard McClennan is Vice Chairman of the Commission. He is President of the International Association of Fire Fighters AFL-CIO, Washington, D.C. The union has approximately 156,000 members. Commissioners are leaders in fields related to fire such as the volunteer and paid fire services, education and research, housing, business, Government, non-profit and trade associations, communications and ethnic minority group affairs. (The Commissioners, advisory members and staff are listed in the Appendix.)

This report summarizes the beginning work of this Commission. The Commission's effort to date has centered on:

1. the initiation of a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the nation's fire problem and possible solutions, and
2. the conduct of a hearing on the basic issues of the national fire problem, the first of five hearings to provide a public forum for discussion of critical issues of the fire problem.

ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION

Since July 20, 1971, the Commission has met almost monthly as a working group, undertaking special studies as functions of various subcommittees. The Commissioners are supported by a small technical staff and expert consultants drawn from the Federal and local governments and the private sector.

The Commission recognized early that any real hope for a turn around in the fire loss must involve the participation of all interested groups, public and private. Accordingly, in addition to responding to the Commission's request for position papers and testimony at public hearings (discussed below), these groups are involved with Commission activity on a recurring basis. Many of the Commissioners attend meetings, write papers and make speeches to fire groups. These groups are numerous and represent a substantial cross section of national activity. Ultimate broad-based support for Commission recommendations require input from these groups. Examples include: American Insurance Association, National Fire Protection Association, American Institute of Architects, National League of

Cities, International Association of Fire Chiefs, International Association of Fire Fighters, International City Management Association, National Academy of Sciences, American National Standards Institute, National Automatic Sprinkler and Fire Control Association, Inc., International Conference of Building Officials, Illinois Institute of Technology, Industrial Designers Society of America, National Science Foundation, National Forest Products Association and many Federal agencies.

Position Papers.

The Commission has encouraged all those concerned with fire—the fire fighter, fire officer, fire marshal, fire protection engineer, the equipment industry, the building industry, the building owner, architects, the insurance industry, the codes and standards-making bodies, the city administrator, the Federal, State and local governments, and that seldom heard from receiver of protection and sometimes unwilling victim, the public—to make known the problems and solutions as they see them from their unique vantage points. Over 100 organizations and individuals were asked to submit position papers on fire prevention and control, increasing life safety in buildings, reducing the social and economic impact of fires and the need for Federal participation. Although the papers have not been thoroughly reviewed, the positions and views appear to be that: existing fire organizations are doing a creditable effort in controlling losses; more could be done if Federal funds were available, if aerospace technology could be brought to bear, if the Federal Government would do more product-oriented research, and if it could act without assuming control to insure improvement in local municipal problems of enforcing building codes, public fire safety education, job transfer between fire departments, etc. In addition, special papers, more extensive and in greater depth, were commissioned from leading experts.

Fire Service Survey.

The Commission has surveyed 27,500 fire departments for data and opinions on such matters as the need for a national fire academy to train fire officers, and for Federal Government participation in research and development and providing financial assistance. Within two weeks about 5,000 responses to the mailed thirty-two question survey were received. A sampling of these responses show the primary concern is for sufficient funds for fire departments, followed by improved personal protective clothing and equipment and better public education for fire safety. Labor-management relations and harrassment of fire fighters were of least concern.

Hearings.

Five public hearings have been planned to be held across the country. These hearings will provide the opportunity to explore various issues and to bring regional attention to the fire problem.

The first hearing was held in the U.S. Senate Office Buildings in Washington, D.C., on February 15, 16 and 17, 1972. This hearing provided an overview of the nation's fire problems. Heard were victims of flammable fabric fires, United States Senator John Sparkman of Alabama who introduced the bill to establish this Commission, Senator George P. Miller of California whose Committee held hearings on the bill, Senator J. Caleb Boggs of Delaware, Congressman Robert Steele of Connecticut, Congressman Jerry L. Pettis of California, representatives of national fire prevention and control organizations, fire chiefs, fire fighters and other experts. Senator Richard Schweiker of Pennsylvania introduced his constituent, Chairman Richard E. Bland.

The next three hearings will explore in-depth issues concerned with fire control, building fire safety and fire prevention. The next hearing—on fire control—will be in Dallas, Texas on April 24-25, 1972. It will focus on the fire services' problems and needs.

The third hearing—on building fire safety—will include testimony on the toxicity of materials of construction, interiors and contents, egress to safe areas during a fire (especially for the physically handicapped); the special problems of mobile houses and high-rise buildings; and the strengthening and enforcement of building and life safety codes. This hearing will be held in Los Angeles and San Francisco in early July, 1972.

The fourth hearing will be held in Chicago on October 10 and 11, 1972, on fire prevention and the recovery aspects of fire, e.g., insurance, medical care and rehabilitation.

The final hearing will be held in June, 1973, in Washington, D.C. to review the findings of the Commission.

Public Information.

Liaison is maintained with members of Congress, the White House and Federal agencies, the latter through agency-appointed staff members. The Commissioners and staff meet and talk with concerned organizations across the country. A newsletter summarizing the activities of the Commission is sent to members of Congress, liaison staff in Federal agencies, the public media and various interested groups.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Based on these activities to date, the Commission finds the following items are among those to which priority attention will be focused:

1. Fire prevention—through the strengthening and enforcement of fire prevention, building codes, life safety codes, fire inspection and especially through education in the schools and the public at large.
2. Early detection and alarm—for the prompt movement of occupants and the appropriate fire fighting response.
3. Personal protective equipment—through the transfer of technology and the development of a mass market.
4. A national fire academy—as a national focus for the strengthening of fire services by providing among other things, the opportunity for increasing professionalization of fire officers and fire fighters.
5. Fire control equipment—through the transfer of existing technology and development of a mass market.
6. National fire reporting and analysis—leading to defining the fire problem and the most advantageous allocation of resources.
7. Research and development—directed toward solving the critical problems of the fire services and the fire protection community.
8. Community relations—directed toward improving the safety of the fire fighters, reducing false alarms and employing ethnic minorities.

PRINCIPAL FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The four public hearings mentioned previously along with working meetings will be held in the next sixteen months.

A comparative analysis of the principal fire issues and solution alternatives will be prepared by the staff from data collected. This will include the probable benefits of various solutions, *i.e.*, their potential for reducing fire losses. This study will provide the basis for the recommendations of the Commission for action, research and development and legislation.

CONCLUSIONS

The relative magnitude of the nation's fire problem (comparable to crime); the recent Congressional interest in allocating funds to Project Aerofire to increase the capability of suppressing forest fires, and in the introduction of various fire bills among other things, for aiding the fire fighters and fire departments throughout the country; the

rising concern of cities over the costs of fire protection; the increasing involvement of the research and development community (e.g., through New Technology Opportunities Program); and a nascent consumer interest—all suggest that a sufficient groundswell of concern for the nation's fire problem is being generated to make a visible attack on fire—one of the prime wasters of our environment.

APPENDIX

COMMISSIONERS, ADVISORY MEMBERS AND STAFF

COMMISSIONERS:

Richard E. Bland is Chairman of the Commission. He is Associate Professor of Engineering Research of the Institute for Science and Engineering, of Pennsylvania State University in State College, Pennsylvania. He is also Special Assistant to the Director of the Ordnance Research Laboratory and Head of Operations of the Laboratory.

W. Howard McClennan is Vice Chairman of the Commission. He is President of the International Association of Fire Fighters, Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Peter G. Peterson, Secretary of Commerce

The Honorable George Romney, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

Louis Amabili, Director, Delaware State Fire School, Dover, Delaware

Lieutenant Tommy Arevalo, El Paso Fire Department, El Paso, Texas

Percy Bugbee, Honorary Chairman, National Fire Protection Association, Boston, Massachusetts

Dorothy S. Duke, Lorain, Ohio, Consultant to Secretary George Romney, Department of Housing and Urban Development, and Housing Specialist, National Council of Negro Women, Washington, D.C.

Dr. Ernst R. G. Eckert, Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Aerospace Engineering, Department of Mechanical Engineering, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Roger M. Freeman, Jr., President, Allendale Mutual Insurance Company, Providence, Rhode Island

Peter Hackes, Correspondent, National Broadcasting Company, Washington, D.C.

Dr. Robert Hechtman, President, R.E. Hechtman and Associates, Reston, Virginia

Albert E. Hole, California Fire Marshal, Sacramento, California

John F. Hurley, Fire Commissioner for the City of Rochester, New York

John L. Jablonsky, Director, Codes and Standards, American Insurance Association, New York, New York

Keith E. Klinger, Fire Chief Emeritus, Los Angeles County Fire Department, California

Anne W. Phillips, M.D., Brookline, Massachusetts

John A. Proven, Executive Secretary, Fire Equipment Manufacturers Association, Inc., Evanston, Illinois

Baron Whitaker, President, Underwriters' Laboratories, Inc., Chicago, Illinois

William J. Young, Chief of the Newington, New Hampshire Fire Department

ADVISORY MEMBERS:

U.S. Senator Warren G. Magnuson of Washington

U.S. Senator J. Caleb Boggs of Delaware

U.S. Representative George P. Miller from the Eighth District in California

U.S. Representative Jerry L. Pettis from the Thirty-Third District in California

STAFF:

Howard D. Tipton, 35 year old former City Manager of Glendora, California, Executive Director of the Commission as of September, 1971.

John F. Christian, Deputy Director for Program Development, was one of the authors of the Fire Research and Safety Act of 1968.

Clayton Willis, Public Affairs Director, formerly with the Ford Foundation, Newsweek, Hearst Newspapers, United Nations and Justice Dept.

Eugene M. Sober, Research Analyst, a Fire Protection Engineer detailed from the Veterans Administration.

Kenneth L. Richardson, Researcher, has a background in engineering and is presently studying law.

David J. Sergeant, Administrative Officer

Jane C. Sornberger, Secretary

Carol M. Pica, Receptionist/Typist