

CITY OVERBOUGHT
FIRE EQUIPMENT

(Continued From Page One.)

ment differs from that contemplated by the board of safety. The city board has planned to have 250 men on duty day and night when the two-platoon system is put into effect. The national board, basing its view on the experience of cities over the country, suggests it would be better to have 214 men on duty days and 204 nights.

POINTS OUT
POSSIBLE SAVING.

In his letter of Nov. 11, accompanying the detailed recommendations, Mr. Sellers points out that by purchasing motor equipment according to the underwriters' outline the city could have saved the expense of eight combined pump, chemical and hose wagons, one sixty-foot aerial truck and three service wagons. Roughly estimated this would figure an unnecessary expenditure by the board on motor equipment of around \$75,000.

The most astonishing fact brought out by the underwriters is that the city will not receive any credit in its rating as to protection from fire because of this extra equipment, but may actually lose credit.

In the rating of cities the National Board of Fire Underwriters uses a point system, adding to the points when the city has some undesirable feature and deducting therefrom when the undesirable feature is eliminated or a desirable feature added.

Indianapolis at present has a rating of 1573. This puts the city in the fourth class, which includes all municipalities with a rating of between 1,500 and 2,000.

By this fourth class rating, the city several years ago obtained a reduction of basic insurance rates to those in force for cities of the third class on premises to make certain improvements in the fire fighting system. Some of these promises have been fulfilled, but most have not, as the lengthy list of recommendations given by Mr. Sellers indicates.

POINTS WAY TO
MORE CREDITS

Mr. Sellers stated that if the city will make all the changes recommended, 807 demerits may be turned into credits and the city's rating as to lack of protection reduced to 711. This would mean that Indianapolis in the second class for insurance rates. There are only two municipalities in the country in this class at present, Mr. Townsend stated. These are small cities in Massachusetts, which enjoy their rating chiefly because their fire fighting system is necessarily so simple there can not be much wrong with it.

The 807 demerits which would be lost by improvements would be divided as follows:

Water supply, 114; fire department, 504; fire alarm system, 147; building laws, 54; explosives and inflammables, 45.

The general views of the underwriters regarding the Indianapolis situation are outlined by Mr. Sellers in his Nov. 11 letter to the board as follows:

LETTER OUTLINES
PROTECTION BASIS.

In compliance with your request, the protection has been graded according to improvements contemplated comprising the purchase of eighteen 600-gallon and seven 750-gallon combined pump, chemical and hose wagons; ten service trucks; one eight-five-foot and two sixty-five-foot aerial trucks; two tractors for steamers; one supply and fuel wagon; all automobile; powerful steam appliances; minor equipment and hose; the erection and equipping of two additional fire stations and repair shop; by increasing the number of company members (to operate under the double platoon system) so that there will be a minimum on duty of 230 firemen each shift (including the proposed two engine and one ladder company) and by arranging to respond to alarms so as to meet standard requirements, which result in a credit of 245 points and reduces the total number of deficiency points to 1,338, or a grade of protection of the third class.

Satisfactory protection for the city's present needs would not require the purchase of the full amount of apparatus as noted above. By purchasing apparatus in accordance with recommendations on page 5, summarized on page 6, there would be a saving in the contemplated equipment of a combined pump, chemical and hose wagon (on automobile combination hose wagon to be purchased, however, to replace automobile platoon hose wagon with engine 13) one sixty-five-foot aerial truck and three service trucks, and by assigning to the apparatus (both old and new as recommended) the standard number of men for the required service there would be needed a minimum on duty of 214 compared with a combined fire force of 250, or a saving of twenty-five men in the day service.

Note: The recommendations on page 5 suggest that two hose, one engine and two ladder companies remain horse-drawn and ultimately be replaced with automobile apparatus. If these companies are motorized under the general motorizing scheme, the points credited will be same as noted below.)

WAY TO GET
14 NEW CREDITS.

With this arrangement (reduced apparatus and men) 14 additional points credit would be in order, or a total of 254 points. This consideration is brought about by the fact that the number of pieces of apparatus, according to the contemplated scheme, exceeds the standard requirements and the number of men assigned to each piece of apparatus is less than the standard requirements; hence a deficiency charge; but if the number of pieces of apparatus is reduced to meet the standard requirements and the proposed number of firemen are distributed in such a manner as to have the standard minimum company strength for each piece of apparatus (total 214 for day duty, that deficiency is removed).

If the minimum number of firemen (230) on night shift of the proposed double platoon system is increased to 254 a further credit of forty points will be available. This would mean that 254 firemen in addition to that contemplated, as the total standard day and night service is 508 firemen, and that contemplated is two shifts of 230 each, or a total of 478 firemen. When the fire department changes to the double platoon system of operation, ordinances should be enacted requiring the men to attend drills and inspect buildings for a certain number of hours each week on their off shift.

At the conference Mr. Townsend laid stress on several improvements which he said the underwriters believe should be put into effect immediately. Chief among these was the absolute divorce of the fire department from politics, even though this means the repeal of the statute providing that an equal number of Republicans and Democrats shall be appointed to it; the establishment of a central repair shop; the appointment of a competent master mechanic to have charge of apparatus repair work; a school of instruction for drivers and operators of motor apparatus; increase of the number of battalion chiefs to eight instead of the present four, so there will be four on duty night and day; a department training school, a fire tower for use in the training courses, and a competent drill master to give drills to the different companies which will rotate so that some one is getting instruction every day.

SUGGESTION ON
POLITICAL PHASE.

The recommendation regarding taking the department out of politics reads as follows:

"That civil service regulations be adopted; these to include tenure of office except after trial on charges and suitable provisions for appointment and promotion, including age, weight and height limits; examinations to be given for each grade, and in the case of engineers, assistant engineers and chauffeurs to consist of a thorough examination of their ability in the maintenance and operation of apparatus."

In discussion of this, Mr. McWhirter and Mr. Dithmer called the attention of Mr. Townsend and Mr. Sellers to attempts the board of safety has made to keep the department out of politics. The underwriters indicated it never can be kept wholly free of politics until the law making the basis of appointment a man's membership in either the Democratic or Republican party is done away with.

The safety board members said solely on merit and they believed they had been able to instill a very fine morale in the department because of the fact very few men have faced charges.

Mr. Townsend seized this occasion to inquire whether this low number of trials might not indicate too great leniency in the enforcement of the board's rules. The board members did not think it did.

SAY THEY WILL
COMPLY WITH SOME.

The safety board members said they have plans under way to comply with many of the suggestions made, including the repair shop, the master mechanic, the school of instruction for drivers, the increase in the number of battalion chiefs and to some extent the department training school.

They disagreed with the underwriters in regard to the lack of necessity for the two new firehouses and all, except one of the three which the underwriters suggested be abandoned. One of the new houses is needed in the territory between Thirty-Eighth street and the northern city limits, comprising a district more than three miles long, without a station, and the other in a section of West Indianapolis now without adequate protection, the city officials said. Mr. Town-

send promised to give this matter more consideration.

Among the recommendations made in addition to those given above are the following:

That water mains throughout the city conform to the underwriters' standards, a list of streets in which additional mains should be laid being given.

That members of the department be retired from active duty at the age of 62, unless unusually efficient.

That engine or hose companies 6, 10, 12 and 31 be discontinued. (This would accompany the abandonment of fire houses as suggested by the underwriters.)

That reserve equipment be provided to include an automobile pumping engine, present engines Nos. 2 and 8, ladder trucks Nos. 2, 7 and 11, and three hose wagons.

That the following horse-drawn apparatus be put to sleep: Hose wagon No. 15, English avenue and Harrison street; hose wagon No. 24, Dexter and Nineteenth streets; engine No. 24, Raymond and Webb streets; ladder truck No. 6, Morris and Harding streets; ladder truck No. 12, Shelby street, opposite Kelly street.

That underwriters' standards in hose equipment be followed, particularly as to the addition of some three-inch hose to the equipment of every hose wagon. (The board of safety plans to follow this in 1921.)

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