

Municipal Column

Edited by the Village Manager

Is This Efficiency?

Fire Prevention Week as designated by proclamation of the governor of the state should remind us that America's fire loss has reached the proportions of a national calamity and we are becoming a criminally careless people. Burning four or five hundred million dollars' worth of property every year has ceased to be a matter of no concern. Our increasing fire loss stands as a serious indictment of the American people. Our 1921 fire loss means that five hundred million dollars' worth of natural and created resources are wiped out of existence. There is a prevailing opinion that fire insurance companies in some mysterious way make good our loss by fire. The proceeds of a fire insurance policy may reimburse the individual for the loss he has sustained, but no amount of money can restore a burned structure. When a fire occurs everybody loses.

The only answer which our country makes to its ever increasing fire loss is to add largely to its insurance premiums and to its fire departments, both in men and equipment. Today our fire departments are recognized as the most efficient in the world and well they need be. American travelers to foreign lands are prone to make rather uncomplimentary and facetious remarks with regard to the antiquated fire fighting equipment maintained by the European cities, entirely overlooking the fact that, while we have been busily engaged in increasing the efficiency of our fire fighting equipment, the American public has been even more busily engaged in increasing its careless habits. We are today confronted with the lamentable fact that our country, with all its wonderful development and fire fighting force and equipment, has an annual fire loss of almost \$5.00 per capita, whereas the foreign countries with antiquated fire fighting equipment, but with careful habits, reinforced by severe personal liability laws, have an annual per capita fire loss ranging from 11 to 60 cents.

The depletion of our resources by fire is in itself an exceedingly serious matter, but the seriousness of the financial loss is greatly exceeded by the seriousness of our loss of life due to fire. Our 1920 figures show that 15,219 persons were burned to death in the United States and 17,641 were seriously injured. Eighty-two per cent of the dead and injured were mothers and children, and 92 per cent of the fires that caused these fatalities were the result of carelessness or negligence. Carefully prepared statistics indicate that approximately 80 per cent of all the fires occurring in the United States are preventable.

It is high time that we turn the spotlight of publicity on our fire loss, make a careful study of the causes of our fires and map out a carefully prepared campaign of education, to the end that the right-thinking people of this country may understand the seriousness of our fire loss and take proper steps to cut this loss to a minimum figure. This campaign of education should be followed by the enactment of rigid laws covering personal liability for preventable fires, and these laws should be enforced to the letter, so that the irresponsible or evil-minded citizen will be compelled to eliminate preventable fires. It has been truly stated that a man who has a preventable fire, picks the pockets of his neighbors, either through a medium of fire insurance or an unjustified use of the public fire department which all must support. It is equally true that the fire departments are not maintained to protect a man from the results of his negligence. When he calls upon the city in any such case he should be made to pay for this service. No civilized country should expect its firemen to risk their lives in fighting fires which are easily preventable. In many of the foreign countries, a man who has a fire must prove to the court that he

was in no way responsible for the fire or he is subjected to a fine and the loss of his insurance. The time must come when the United States will enact laws covering personal liability for preventable fires.

The per capita fire loss in Winnetka during the year ending March 31, 1922, was \$2.21, based on a population of 8,000. While this is considerably below the national average, there is still room for improvement. The Fire Department is making a strong effort to lower the loss for 1922-23 by conducting routine fire prevention inspections, particularly in the business districts of the Village. A considerable portion of the time of the Chief of the Fire Department is devoted to this work. In addition, the Village recently distributed 1,500 copies of a circular of the National Fire Prevention Association, entitled "Clean Your Chimneys," giving practical suggestions for avoiding unnecessary chimney fires.

YOUTHFUL MARINERS STAGE BOAT RACES

The Skokie school Yacht Club has accepted a challenge from the Yacht Club of the Frances W. Parker school, Chicago, to a competition and racing match. The challenge was accepted last Wednesday.

The match will be held, if present plans are carried out, in the swimming tank of the New Trier High school. In addition to the races between the model yachts that the boys have built there will be close competition as to design and rigging of the boats. Although the motor boats will probably race in the New Trier tank it will be necessary to hold the meets between the sailing vessels out of doors.

All of the yachts that will appear in the competition have been designed and constructed by members of the Yacht club, seventh and eighth graders. The Skokie Yacht club is one of the most prominent organizations of the school. John West is commodore of the club, Walter Neubacher is vice-commodore, and Ariel Jewell is treasurer.

Community Players Offer "Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh"

Playgoers of Winnetka are anticipating with keen pleasure the forthcoming appearance of the Community Players in the interesting three-act comedy-drama, "Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh," to be produced at Community House Thursday evening, November 2, at 8:15 o'clock.

The Players of the Community Drama club are prepared to give Winnetka an evening of genuine entertainment upon the occasion of this production.

Of particular interest at this time is a contemplation of the excellent cast of characters now rehearsing for the play. Those assuming prominent roles are:

Mrs. H. P. Clarke, Mrs. Davies Lazear, Mrs. Luther Barber, Mrs. Louis Sherman, Mrs. Walter Johnson, Miss Helen Davis, Mr. Coran Davis, Mr. L. L. Buchanan, Mr. Ralph Varney, Mr. Humphrey, Mr. Harold Gilson and Mr. Vernon M. Welsh.

Woman's Forum to Hear Democratic Candidates

The Illinois Woman's Forum is to give a luncheon at the Arts club, Chicago, Monday, October 16, in honor of the Democratic candidates for Congress who will give the addresses at the meeting.

Those interested may secure invitations by communicating with Mrs. Frank R. Fuller, Indian Hill.

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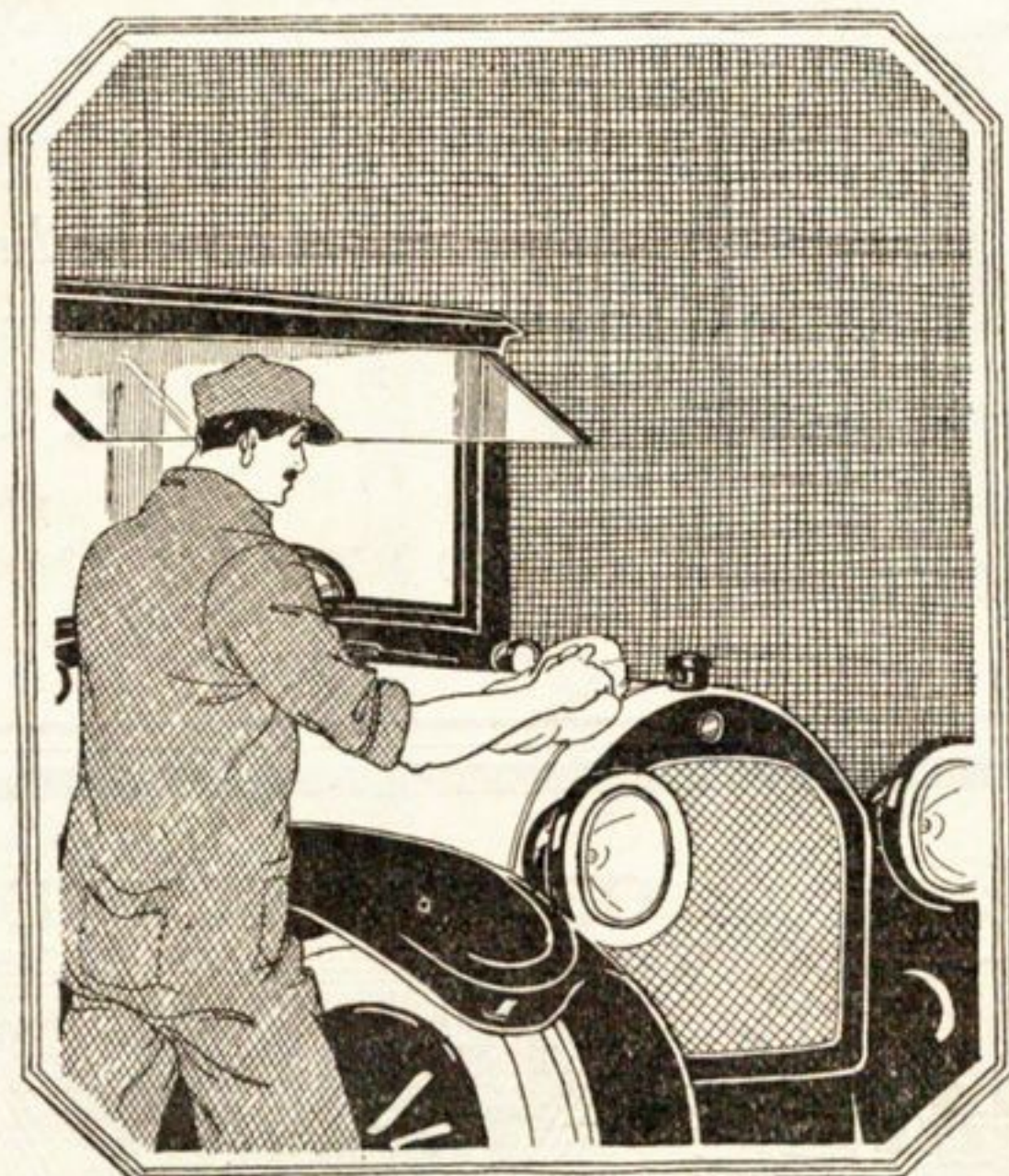
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By way of Apology—

We did not anticipate any such spontaneous response as greeted our efforts to establish a bureau of roofing service. The delays occasioned by the volume of inquiries received—coupled with the details accompanying the launching of a new enterprise—did not permit us in the past week to render service as promptly as we desired. Delay in installation of phone services forces us to apologize further to those who were unable to establish contact through this source.

You will find us now, however, promptly and completely at your service.

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