

File: Sprague

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July 25th, 1932.

FRANK J. SPRAGUE ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE,

Dr. Gano Dunn, Chairman,  
Dr. Cary T. Hutchinson, Secretary,  
52 William Street, New York City.

FOR RELEASE TUESDAY, July 26th, 1932.

ENGINEER IS HONORED AS PUBLIC BENEFACTOR.

An unusual appreciation and tribute to a distinguished engineer while he is still alive, was rendered last evening at the Engineering Auditorium, 29 West 39th Street, to Dr. Frank J. Sprague, the pioneer of electrical transportation, on the occasion of his seventy-fifth anniversary.

An outstanding feature of the meeting was the presentation to the eminent inventor by one of his oldest friends, Rear Admiral S. S. Robison, U.S.N. (Ret.), of a handsome set of volumes containing more than 500 autograph letters received from friends and admirers all over the world, with photographs of the writers, one of whom was President Herbert Hoover who, writing as an engineer, expressed his tribute in the following terms:

"My dear Mr. Sprague:

I send you my cordial felicitations on your 75th birthday and all good wishes for the future.

Your contribution in the development of the electric motor, followed by the application of electricity to street railways and to elevators, links your name for all time with that distinguished group of inventors and engineers whose pioneer work made possible so many of our present utilities, comforts and conveniences.

It is fitting that the engineering and scientific world should show general recognition of your noteworthy services to the electric art, and it is with regret that I find I shall not be able to be present at your anniversary celebration.

Yours faithfully,

HERBERT HOOVER."

Dr. Sprague's achievements include the first practicable electric trolley operated in Richmond, Virginia, in 1887; the multiple unit system now used in all

subways and on many other electric railways; the first electric elevators, culminating in the modern dual system using two elevators in the same shaft; automatic remote control systems for fire doors, theatre curtains and many other purposes; important features of present-day electric railway signals; and many others.

In reviewing Dr. Sprague's inventions in the field of electric transportation, Mr. Frank Hedley, President of the Interborough Rapid Transit Company, described Dr. Sprague's contributions as giving him "the same relation to electric transportation that Thomas A. Edison bore to electric illumination".

"Dr. Sprague has not rested", Mr. Hedley continued, "with the mere inventing, or suggesting, of new methods. He has recognized that the world is often too busy to pay attention to new and advanced ideas which are considered revolutionary, or to give them a trial unless forced to do so, and he has made it his business to do the necessary forcing. It is fortunate for the electric railway industry that he has made it his business to see that a new idea in which he had faith was followed through the experimental stage and put into successful use. I know that he has not always had a clear track in his struggle for recognition for the products of his inventive talent. He knows what it means to have the signals set against him and to be forced onto a side-track and delayed. Nevertheless, we are here this evening because his inventions have proved worth while and he had sufficient faith in them to fight for them, even when confronted with discouraging conditions and fierce competition".

The tribute to Dr. Sprague was organized by a committee of outstanding personalities in the scientific and industrial world, including: C. E. Skinner, President, American Institute of Electrical Engineers; C. N. Lauer, President, American Society of Mechanical Engineers; H. S. Crocker, President, American Society of Civil Engineers; Scott Turner, President, American Institute of Mining Engineers; C. P. Perin, President, American Institute of Consulting Engineers; O. H. Caldwell, President, New York Electrical Society; H. Hobart Porter, President, The Engineering Foundation; H. A. Kidder, President, United Engineering Trustees; G. A. Richardson, President, American Electric Railway Association; J. F. Owens, President, National Electric Light

Association; G. P. Jessop, President, Naval Academy Graduates Association of N. Y.; J. Howland Gardner, President, Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers; Charles M. Schwab, President, American Iron and Steel Institute; Nicholas Murray Butler, President, Columbia University; Thos. S. Gates, President, University of Pennsylvania; Harvey N. Davis, President, Stevens Institute; Howard McClenahan, Secretary, Franklin Institute; C. G. Abbott, Secretary, Smithsonian Institution; Geo. LeBoutillier, President, New York Railroad Club; Thos. Robins, Secretary, Naval Consulting Board; Merlin Aylesworth, President, National Broadcasting Company; Prof. Dugald Jackson, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Dr. Frank B. Jewett, President, Bell Telephone Laboratories; F. A. Merrick, President, Westinghouse Electric & Manufacturing Company; Prof. Michael I. Pupin, Columbia University; A. W. Robertson, Chairman, Board of Directors, Westinghouse Company; Admiral William S. Sims; Gerard Swope, President, General Electric Company; S. M. Vauclain, Chairman of Board, Baldwin Locomotive Company, and Owen D. Young, Chairman of Board, General Electric Company.

The speakers, in addition to Mr. Hedley, were Dr. John H. Finley, Associate Editor of the New York Times, who emphasized the contribution of Dr. Sprague and other engineers to the world's welfare, and Rear Admiral S. S. Robison, U.S.N. (Ret.), one of the inventor's classmates at Annapolis in 1878.

Dr. Sprague acknowledged the tribute in a short response, expressing his thankfulness at having been able to be of service to his fellow-men in facilitating their every-day movements in the crowded cities of modern times.

The meeting was presided over by Dr. Gano Dunn, Chairman of the Committee, and President of J. G. White Engineering Corporation. Dr. Cary T. Hutchinson, Consulting Engineer, was the Committee's Secretary.

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