

file =
"Pending"

April 16, 1934

Dr. Frank J. Sprague,
40 West 58th Street,
New York, N. Y.

Re: Mr. Victor H. Rapke

My dear Doctor Sprague:

Did you ever know a person of the above-mentioned name?

An elderly person claiming that name came in here the other day to tell me a long story that I haven't yet figured out. In short, he claimed to have been the originator of most of Thomas A. Edison's brilliant ideas, and claims to have been a weekly consultant of Edison and his technical staff "for many years."

If you happen to know anything of the gentleman, or know where I might find out something about him, I would greatly appreciate it.

Sincerely hoping that this finds you at least well along the road to full recovery, I am

Cordially yours,

G. Ross Henninger
Editor

AW
Ediphoned

TELEPHONE
WALKER 5-0898

FRANK J. SPRAGUE
421 CANAL STREET

FOR PERMANENT RECORD
FILE IN
MEMBER FOLDER

A. I. E. E. EDITORIAL DEPT.	
RECD. APR 18 1934	
REFER TO:	FILE:
H. H. H.	Regular Ms
F. A. N.	Special Ms
G. R. H.	Discussion Ms
F. A. L.	
W. C.	News
R. M. P.	
C. S. R.	
C. A. G.	Corresp.
M. C. F.	Referral to
Destroy	

NEW YORK, Apr. 18, 1934

Mr. G. Ross Henninger, Editor,
American Institute of Electrical Engineers,
33 W. 39th Street, New York.

Dear Mr. Henninger: Re Mr. Victor H. Rapke

Referring to the above, there is no reference in my office records which would locate him, and while I have a faint impression that I have come across the name, I have no distinct recollection of it.

My connection with Mr. Edison was only for about eleven months - May '83 to Apr. '84, and I had nothing to do with the laboratory, my work being principally in connection with central station matters.

Mr. Edison, like every other active inventor, had a number of people around him, several devoted to special work, and I think it only fair to say that whatever changes or suggestions came up they were considered strictly as "Edisonia."

An extreme example of this tendency is shown by what occurred at the time of the consolidation of Sprague Electric Railway and Motor Company with the Edison General Electric Company. In the circular giving reasons for the consolidation it was stated that Mr. Edison had not succeeded in the development of the stationary motor or the railway motor but that Sprague had, and hence the desirability of the consolidation. Despite this fact, as soon as the consolidation took place an interoffice order was issued stating that the Sprague Electric Railway system - already adopted on 110 railroads - would thereafter be known as the Edison Electric Railway system.

Also in this connection some correspondence with Mr. Ludwig Ott, son of a long time confidential Edison employe, is illustrative. I will ask Miss McLaughlin to show this to you.

Of one thing I am quite sure - that is, any claim of a consulting retainership is very doubtful. That was not Mr. Edison's method of working. A man was either in his employ or not.

Mr. Henninger -- #2

Apr. 18, 1934

He was not on a fly-wheel.

Now that Mr. Insull is not accessible, and Mr. W. J. Hammer has just died, I can think of only two people who might be able to give you some information - Mr. Edwin W. Hammer, 322 Tillou Road, South Orange, N.J. and Mr. Frederick A. Scheffler, 85 Liberty St., New York, both of whom were with Edison. Possibly Mr. Ludwig Ott, 51 Ridgewood Ave., Glen Ridge, N. J., heretofore mentioned, might know of him.

If I had a talk with the man directly in your presence I think I could quickly determine what real basis there is for his claims, which sound very doubtful.

Sincerely yours,

FJS/M

Frank J. Sprague.

By Bill.

*Dr. Sprague
has a letter
4-11-28 from
Mr. Ott listing
several patents
by Edison
works
of*