

for the best talent we have in the State to discuss measures to prevent fires. The purpose of the Conference is set forth in your printed program, which says that it was called by me, as your Governor "for the purpose of exploring ways and means of reducing fire losses in Maryland." It states a thesis—which we have heard many times but which is worth repeating—that of all the forces of nature, fire is one over which "man should have virtual control." It is the objective of this conference, then, to discover and to recommend the use of the means and methods that will afford us this control over destructive fires.

This 1965 Conference follows a pattern that has been established for conferences of previous years. That is to say, it is a working Conference, with everyone concerned with the problem of fire prevention invited to attend. In looking over the program, I am impressed this year, as I have been impressed in the years past, with the scope of the program that has been outlined for these two days. I am impressed also by the truly splendid array of talent and experience which has been brought together, for the group conferences and for the remainder of the program.

Your Chairman, Chief Howard Springer, of the Army Chemical Center at Edgewood; Fire Marshal Robertson; Bob Byrus, of the Fire Service Extension of the University of Maryland; your Conference Secretary, Mr. Floyd Heimer, of the Maryland State Firemen's Association; and the many others of the arrangements committee are to be congratulated for the splendid work they have done in planning and preparing for the meeting. From an examination of the program, it is quite obvious that just about every aspect of fire prevention is covered in the group conferences to be held this afternoon and tomorrow. With such an excellent program, and with all the intelligence, the skills and the experience that has been assembled here, there is every reason for us to feel optimistic that this 1965 Conference will be a distinct success. For myself, I feel confident that it will.

As most of you here have heard me say many times, I feel that it is a great shame that man-made and preventable fires continue to take such heavy toll in human lives and in property destroyed in our State. Perhaps the total elimination of fire destruction is unattainable. But certainly the "virtual control" which your program speaks of is within the realm of possibility, and it behooves us, as responsible citizens, to continue to work tirelessly toward this objective. We have at our disposal both the knowledge and the resources that are needed to give the people maximum protection against the ravages of fires. As responsible citizens, it is our obligation to see that this knowledge and these resources are used effectively.