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THE REPORT OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL
ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES
OF THE VENDOME FIRE ON JUNE 17, 1972

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The Report of the State Fire Marshal on the Circumstances
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On June 17, 1972, the name "Vendome" was written into the history of the City of Boston as a synonym for disaster. In the fire that afternoon the lives of nine members of the Boston Fire Department were lost when a part of the building collapsed. No greater loss has ever been experienced by the Department. Although the threat of death or injury is part of a firefighter's life each day, the magnitude of this loss shocked the City, the State and the Nation. The questions came quickly: Had there been an error? Was someone negligent? Who was to blame? What was to be done?

In an effort to find the explanation for what occurred, investigations were begun by the Fire Department, the City, the owner and builder, the insurers involved, and by the State Fire Marshal. The Marshal has included a series of hearings in his investigation in an attempt to consolidate all of the available information into a single analysis. That analysis is the subject of this report.

The data on the fire is voluminous and since the details of the fire fighting operations are on file in the Department and in the Fire Marshal's office, they will be summarized rather than fully repeated here.

The fire was discovered at two o'clock in the afternoon by the electrical foreman, James Ahearn, who was in the building for sand-blasting work. No other construction was in progress that day

The



first alarm was quickly sounded, and within the hour three additional alarms were rung. By four o'clock, 26 companies had responded. Although the fire was first detected early that afternoon, there are indications that it actually began earlier but burned for a significant period of time in an enclosed space in the ceiling of the third floor on the easterly side of the building

From there it spread quickly upward and outward, eventually involving the upper floors and roof of the southeast section as well as adjacent parts of the remainder of the building. At about twenty minutes past five acting Chief Dolan who was in command reported the fire under control. Eight minutes later the roof, floors and exterior walls of the southeast section collapsed straight down and inward, burying firefighters and equipment in a deadly avalanche of debris

All efforts were immediately directed to freeing those trapped in the rubble. The work went on into the night, and the fire was not fully extinguished until the following day.

Structural failure is not unknown to firefighters, and procedures have been developed over the years to evaluate the risks in any fire. Chief George Paul listed the signs which generally indicate a danger of collapse. These included cracks, falling bricks, smoke or water coming through the masonry, creaking timbers, sagging floors, and water collecting in low spots on the floors. He stated that a survey had been made at the Vendome, as it is in every fire before the men were sent in and during the fire. The Vendome, the Chief observed, was the

"most hazardous" type of building in terms of the possibility of collapse because it was built of masonry walls with wood joist floors and a wood joist roof but it did not appear to show any of the typical warning signs of collapse in advance. In addition, an officer who had survived two previous cave-ins, testified that the Vendome collapse was different in that the floor on which he was standing went straight out from under him, rather than tipping or slanting away

Probably as a result of the heavy casualties and the suddenness of the collapse, the fire and the collapse took on the aspects of two independent events, with most of the attention being focused on the collapse. This separation is clearly seen in the Prologue to the Walter J. Hickey Report prepared for the Fire Department.

"According to the survivors, there were no sounds of creaking timbers or of crushing masonry that experienced firefighters usually associate with an incipient failure. There were none of the usual signs or sounds that would warn or alert experienced firefighters of a major weakening or of an impending collapse and which would have warranted an order to withdraw or abandon the area."

"In view of these facts, it was felt that the cause of the collapse was something other than the fire itself (since the fire in the collapsed area was confined to the top story); therefore, it was decided that an investigation should be made to determine the cause of the failure."

In considering all of the information now available, however, we find that the collapse did come about as a result of the fire. The consensus is that the collapse occurred when a brick and mortar wall in the basement failed to support a steel column above it. This column was one of a pair that

carried an iron beam structural system for the four floors and roof above. The beams and columns are thought to have been installed around 1890 on the first floor of the southeast section to replace bearing walls which may have been removed during renovations at that time. The consensus also extends to a belief that the beam and column system was just barely adequate to support the weight resting upon it, and consequently, the margin of safety was already insufficient before the Franchi renovations began. This, of course, raises the question of whether the Franchi renovations altered that support system, and if so, how and with what effect.

Here, most of the discussion centers around an opening made above an existing doorway in this basement wall during the late summer or early fall of 1971. It is clear that part of the brick and mortar was removed by an employee of Eastern Builders, Inc. to permit the passage of an air duct from the restaurant in the front of the building to an opening in the rear of the building.

The five structural engineers who addressed themselves to the effect of making this opening in the wall were not in agreement. Thoen of LeMessurier Associates concluded that it did not alter the stress at the base of the column. Hickey thought the opening weakened the support system in that it increased the stress in the area of the wall below the base of the column, but he candidly admitted that he did not actually know the exact position of the opening in the wall before the collapse. Pierce of Charles T. Main, Inc., hired by the City, believed that the opening

had a weakening effect on the wall but his report also shows the column resting on two large granite blocks which extend over the area in which the opening is thought to have been made

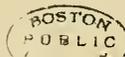
Pierce's view was not shared by Heger of Simpson, Gumpertz & Heger, Inc., hired by the Franchi Development Trust. It was Heger's opinion that there were no such blocks under the column and Heger took the position that the extent of overstress was so great to start with that there was a real possibility of structural failure, even without the duct opening

Terrenzio of Edwards & Kelcey, Inc., hired by Continental National American Group went so far as to say that the duct opening was not a significant factor contributing to the collapse, and if the fire had not occurred, it is more likely than not that the Vendome would have remained standing

Although his employment was mainly for other aspects of damage done to the building by the fire, Prof. Littleton of Tufts also described that this opening had been in place for eight months and yet the building remained standing, and he concluded that while it may have put the building in a marginal position, it was the fire that brought about the failure

We note that the failure did not occur until about three hours after the fire was first detected.

When tragedy strikes, there is a natural tendency to strike back, to want to find someone to blame, to want to find that someone's action or inaction was the cause, and to identify those at fault. When a fire is involved, the law places a special responsibility upon the Fire Marshal and in meeting that

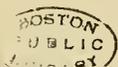


responsibility he must follow the direction in which the reliable information points. In this case we are obliged to find that the deaths and injuries of June 17 were caused by a fire which brought about a structural failure. There is sufficient data for speculation as to the manner in which that failure occurred, but insufficient information to identify all of the elements with enough certainty to warrant any accusations of criminal responsibility against anyone. We find no evidence of arson, nor do we find any reason to believe that any person acted intentionally so as to weaken the building. We find that prior to the start of the Franchi renovations, the building was surveyed visually for structural and architectural considerations. In May, 1970, an examination by Theodore/Weaver/Associates, Inc. concluded that:

"The Hotel Vendome is an old building which, when properly renovated, will still have many years of productive life ahead. The building has a proud history and is of such architectural style that it will never be repeated. The Hotel Vendome deserves to be retained."

Signs of distress in this survey were found only along the westerly side of the building in occasional separations of brick and mortar as the result of water seepage from a leak in the roof, together with a degree of bowing in the wall. This condition was confined to portions of the building which remained standing after the fire. No structural inadequacies were found in the area which collapsed on June 17. Confidence in the basic stability of the building, was expressed also by LeMessurier Associates.

In the absence of gross, visible signs of distress,



only a complete removal of all finish coverings would fully disclose the underlying structural "skeleton"; and such a removal is not commonly done before the start of a renovation project

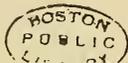
We do find, nevertheless, indications of severe administrative disorder in the development of the project, and our finding includes the Boston Building Department, Stahl Associates, and LeMessurier Associates, Franchi Construction Co., Inc., and Eastern Builders, Inc. We report on this aspect of the matter in the earnest hope that the same pattern will never be repeated in this State.

I. The Boston Building Department.

Perhaps this section ought to be entitled: "Is there a Boston Building Department?". To the extent that the Department exercised supervision over the Vendome renovations, the answer is clearly negative.

Although the conversion of this building from a hotel to a combination of apartments and stores was a major undertaking, the initial submission and review of plans can be described as only cursory. On April 28, 1971 the Department issued a "short form permit" for stripping and rubbish removal in preparation for renovating the interior of the building. The form specified that it is not to be used for changes in occupancy.

The next application received was a so-called long form for "alterations, repairs or change of occupancy" dated May 24, 1971 and given the number 664. A description of the proposed work says "Renovate Cafe



Vendome--include new walls, electrical HVAC. This application for cafe occupancy only--following long form application to detail alterations and occupancy of remainder of building." Within a few weeks, however, on June 30, 1971, application 664 was abandoned, no permit having been issued, and in its place a new application, number 860, dated June 30, 1971 was accepted.

There are differences between these two applications. The earlier application, number 664, states that after alteration the building was to be occupied for a "restaurant and lounge". The later application number 860 gives "hotel" as the intended use instead. In the description of the proposed work, application number 860 says: "Renovate Cafe Vendome restaurant dining facilities as per plans filed". The words "No Structural Changes RPL for Stahl Associates 7.23.71" were added to the application as it was being hand-carried through the Boston Building Department's office by Roger Lang, an employee of the architect, Stahl Associates. Lang was not then a registered architect or engineer, and in adding this phase he did not consult anyone at Stahl or at the structural engineers, LeMessurier Associates. The effect of the addition of these words was to allow the issuance of the building permit by the Department without these plans being checked by the officials in the Department responsible for passing on structural considerations. Among the plans submitted with application number 860, however, there is a clear indication that it would be necessary to penetrate the building both vertically and horizontally



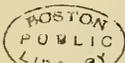
for duct work of substantial size, and there is no certificate or other representation by any registered architect or engineer that the placing of these ducts would not involve any structural members in the building. Permit number 860 was issued on July 26, 1971.

Application number 862 is also dated June 30, 1971, and it covers the conversion of the rest of the building into 124 apartments and a shopping mall. A set of plans accompanied this application also. Processing of the application was delayed because of zoning considerations not relevant here, and the permit itself was not granted until December 7, 1971.

It is significant that in the preparation of the applications and plans for the Cafe and building renovations, both the architect and structural engineer said that they were under considerable pressure from the owner to have the applications filed before July 1, 1971. On that date the new Boston Building Code took effect, and its impact on this project would have been substantial, at least to the extent of delaying the issuance of building permits.

As a result, the plans which were filed had a preliminary quality about them. The preparation of more detailed plans was contemplated then but these were never prepared nor submitted. No specifications appear to have been prepared or submitted for this project either.

Nevertheless, the page of the general renovation plans bearing the various stamps of approval (including that of the Boston Fire Department)



bears a notation that a further submission of mechanical plans specifically was to be made. The Building Commissioner, however, was not able to state whether such later submission was ever made, and he suggested that his staff member responsible for that notation probably didn't know what he was talking about.

The Building Commissioner revealed that in reviewing the plans submitted with an application for a building permit, the staff in his office relies entirely upon the stamp of the architect or engineer who prepared the plans. Except to the extent that the Department's building inspectors in the field seek to look behind what appears on the face of the plans, there is no on-site review. As the Commissioner described it, the function of the "inspection arm" of the Department is to see these plans on the jobsite, adding that the builder is required to keep them available there for the purpose of enabling the inspector to examine anything that may come to his attention. If that is the Department's system, it did not work at the Vendome.

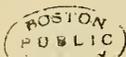
The inspector involved on this project had been appointed some 7 years earlier, but at no time before the start of his duties and at no time since did he receive one hour's worth of training from the City on the problems and techniques of inspection, or on matters of architectural or structural importance. The City was apparently content to rely upon his background which consisted of three years of high school, 18 to 20 years as a "builder" and a few night courses.

His understanding of his responsibilities, once a permit is issued, consisted of going out to "see that the work is being done in a workmanlike manner and that they are living up to the permit that is issued"

This was done by about 24 site inspections on various dates before the fire between June 8, 1971 and May 26, 1972 After each visit the inspector said he prepared a report on a Department form which he submitted to his superiors. Each report includes a one or two line reference to the Vendome among the references to half a dozen or so other projects that fell within his jurisdiction. Each visit probably did not last more than 45 minutes

At no time did this inspector actually look at the plans in the construction office, and although he said he saw "plans" there, he had no idea of the work they covered and in fact he could not be certain if the "plans" related to the Vendome at all The only guide he used to measure the work being done was the general language written on the application for the building permit The extent of his inspection of the work during these visits must also be questioned, for he said that he never saw any bearing walls removed The record, however, indicates that at least one such wall had been taken out of the southeast basement and replaced with a system of temporary supports by December 1971 when Joseph Lazo, a licensed builder, first came on the job

The efforts the inspector did make to do his job appear to have come to a dead-end in at least two instances. In August, 1971, he found the



the work being done exceeded the scope of the permit issued, in that the tower on the roof had been reboarded, new windows were being installed and interior masonry walls were being installed

A violation notice was prepared and issued, and "court action" was recommended by the inspector and the Department's principal legal assistant

The inspector heard nothing further with respect to this violation and did not know whether any action was taken on it even though in the usual case the inspector eventually learns the disposition made

The Building Commissioner himself said that he did not know what action, if any, had been taken

Again in December 1971, another violation notice was issued for the absence of a licensed builder from the premises, as reported by the inspector, but no other action appears to have been taken on this matter either even though the other jobs have actually been stopped for that very reason, according to the Building Commissioner

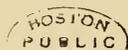
The Building Commissioner probably best summed up the present state of affairs himself when he said: "We have brick layers, we have carpenters, and they're good honest people, I don't wish to belittle them at all, but they cannot make professional judgments that are required, and one of the worst things is the public thinks that here we are guarding every apartment every kitchen appliance, and we aren't. We aren't even flirting with the surface."

Richard R. Thuma, Jr. has been the Building Commissioner for the



City of Boston for nearly six years but at the time of this inquiry he was not familiar with the "clerical association" of permit applications and their supporting plans in his office , nor with the means of keeping track of the licensed builders assigned to projects ; in fact, the Department has no record of any licensed builder on the Vendome from May 24 through June 13, 1972 ; nor with the process of receiving his inspector's field reports He indicated that his Department is "making progress...increasing our technical and professional competency", but that he is still the only professional engineer on the staff He proposed improvement through City Council action to require an annual or biannual building inspection by professional engineers or architects , so as to shift much of the inspection burden into the hands of the "professional community" in a system analogous to the semi-annual motor vehicle inspection . How this procedure would have averted the Vendome fire or its consequences is not clear, nor is it easy to understand how the functions of the Department would be improved by a further shift of responsibility, in light of the Commissioner's earlier testimony that his staff already relies entirely upon the stamp of an architect or engineer in reviewing plans submitted with permit application.

If the Vendome experience is an example of the manner in which the Building Department protects the public interest, it is appropriate to suggest that the City critically review the entire operation immediately to



make certain that the other projects now underway are not receiving the same lack of supervision accorded to the Vendome. The Commissioner has had enough time to put his house in order.

II. The Architects and Engineers.

The relationship among the architect, the engineer and the owner in this case deserves a second look, in light of the Building Commissioner's testimony about his Department's complete reliance upon the professional stamp appearing on the plans.

Frederick Stahl of Stahl Associates described the engagement of his architectural firm for this job by Pasquale Franchi as something other than "a regular over view on the site" Instead of the usual contract for architectural services, Stahl was given different authorizations at different times to do different things by Franchi who was then president of Franchi Construction Co., Inc. For example, a letter from Stahl's Vice President to Franchi on March 23, 1971 says in part: "It is understood that the nature of renovation projects and the unique working relationship we both envision does not permit a precise statement of the total scope of services required". The letter goes on to identify ten tasks to be performed by Stahl and adds: "It is understood that our consultant involvement shall be sufficient to assure control of all major parameters affecting professional architectural and engineering liability. At a minimum, this should include all elements of the renovation which affect the structural characteristics of the building, the safety of

its occupants and the minimum requirements for certification from all affected agencies (Building Department, Zoning Board, Department of Public Safety, etc.)" In this letter Stahl was also authorized to hire the services of LeMessurier Associates" for the purpose of structural engineering consultation which may be required during the performance of our services"

Shortly after the June 30, 1971 filing of the renovation applications and plans mentioned earlier, Stahl received a letter from Franchi dated August 3, 1971, enclosing a payment on account and saying: "I would like to request at this time that no further work or time be spent on this project unless authorized by me personally. The architectural cost of this project is exceeding our budget; and, therefore, I would like to be sure that further professional service is definitely needed."

The services of both Stahl and LeMessurier were suspended as of August 6, 1971 . At this point, to their credit, Stahl knew that they could not continue to serve as the architects on this project without the involvement of a structural engineer who would be able to certify at the end of the project that the building as altered met safety requirements

After discussions with Franchi, Stahl was reactivated and authorized to direct LeMessurier to resume work, but under fairly tight cost control

Stahl resumed the work in mid September, 1971, but LeMessurier did not return to the project until October

During the time the architect and the engineer were off the job, the

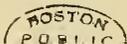
work appears to have continued. In fact, it was within this very period that the duct opening was made in the basement wall, as described earlier in this report

Roger Lang the Stahl employee mentioned earlier, "some time in the Summer of 1971" instructed Arthur Dickerman, Franchi's project director, to locate the grille for the end of the air duct on the rear wall of the building, rather than on the Dartmouth Street side. Although Lang knew that this would require the duct to pass through several walls in the basement before reaching the rear, he did not consult any structural engineer nor did he suggest that Dickerman do so

When the Cotti-Lawrence Corp. workers arrived on the job in September 1971 to install the duct as directed by James Neundorf, Franchi's licensed builder, they found the holes already made through the basement walls in the direction the duct was to run

Consequently, there was no review of this particular operation by the Building Department or by any structural engineer, although there was conflict within the Franchi organization over the route the duct should follow. Vincent Piconi, the engineer who prepared the restaurant ventilation plan wanted the duct placed closer to the westerly basement wall, to run straight back along the side that remained standing after the fire. Dickerman apparently on the basis of cost ordered that the duct go straight back in the area in which it was subsequently placed, but without any engineering advice

It is ironic that if Piconi's recommendation had been followed, the duct



opening would have been several feet away from the area below the base of the central column and therefore beyond the range of being considered a factor in the collapse of the southeast section.

As Lang was the principal contact man on the Vendome job for Stahl Associates, Frederick Cowen was the job captain for LeMessurier Associates. He did not become a registered engineer until June 1972. Around October 7, 1971, he made a survey of the building during which he took a series of photographs and made notations on a set of renovation plans of various conditions he thought worthy of attention

Among these photographs are two of the duct work going through the basement walls. These, Cowen said were taken for the purpose of noting the area as "a condition that needed to be repaired." for it appeared significant to him in relation to integrity of the wall" He reported this to Lang and conceived of steps to minimize the opening and to establish the integrity of the lintel in the doorway. He did not, however, discuss these areas with the builders because, in his opinion, immediate action was not required. He said that he did not know that a main bearing wall was involved. In fact, the notations Cowen made on the plans in October 1971 and delivered to Stahl Associates were not received by Eastern Builders until June 15, 1972, over eight months later

It is hard to square this delay with Thoen's testimony. As the partner in charge of this project for LeMessurier Associates



Thoen was Cowen's immediate superior. He said he had not been consulted about the making of the basement wall duct openings, contrary to normal practice but, if he had been consulted he would have had the obligation to check in detail what was happening both above and below the vicinity of the openings. This is axiomatic, he added, especially when working with old buildings. Even if by some oversight, Stahl failed to act upon or to transmit Cowen's notations to the builder, there is nothing to indicate that Thoen, Cowen, Stahl or Lang offered any comment to Franchi or to his employees relative to this part of the work done during their absence from the job, prior to July 15, 1972

This omission is not consistent with the complete reliance placed upon the architects and engineers by the Boston Building Department; and in this case, it left the owner and builder free to do things their own way.

The difficulty illustrated here is that it appears to be possible for an owner to hire well-established architectural and engineering firms, only to dismiss them or limit their roles after the building permits have been issued, while the Building Department goes on believing that the public interest is being protected by these professionals. Accordingly, we think it is necessary to establish and to enforce minimum levels of architectural and engineering participation as a condition of the issuance and continuing validity of building permits in major projects. If personnel and fiscal limitations make it necessary for the Building Department to rely upon private professionals, the public has a right to require a level of participation

appropriate to the project. The complexity of the Vendome renovations would have required the highest degree of their participation. What was actually provided was something less.

III. The Builders.

Although title to the Vendome was transferred around March 3, 1971, to the Franchi Development Trust, Richard Saletta, Trustee, all of the applications for building permits identify the owner of the property as Pasquale Franchi. On applications 860 and 862 the name of the contractor is given as Eastern Builders, Inc.

The corporate records in the Office of Secretary of the Commonwealth show that Eastern was formed in July 1970 with Antonio Franchi, President; Charles Hodges, Treasurer; Amerigo Franchi, Clerk; and in addition, Richard Saletta and Charles Pappas as directors. The principal office is given as 425 Watertown Street, Newton. Also operating out of the same address is the Franchi Construction Co., Inc., formed on March 4, 1957. Pasquale Franchi is the President and Treasurer; Richard T. Brogolino, Clerk; and in addition, Madeline Franchi and Richard Saletta are directors according to the last certificate of condition.

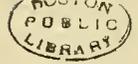
There is no doubt that Pasquale (Pat) Franchi was the person primarily in charge of this project. Eastern Builders and Franchi Construction Co. operated according to his orders. Antonio Franchi, his brother, although listed as the President of Eastern was virtually without knowledge as to its operations. For example, although he said that he had an oral contract from his brother Pat for the Cafe renovations



he did not know when the work began or when it ended, nor did he know where to look to find out. Also, he said he never saw the plans for the restaurant. After the Cafe work was done, he said that Eastern was hired orally to do the renovations in the remainder of the building. and he thought that the work began in July, 1971, but he said he never saw these renovation plans either.

There was also a mixing of employees between the two companies on this job. For example, Joseph Lazo was on the job from December 1971 to June, 1972, most of the time as superintendent, but he was always an employee of the Franchi Construction Co., and he was assigned the project by Pasquale Franchi. His predecessor, W. E. Read, was also a Franchi Construction Co. employee. Even Thomas Peters, the Vice President of Eastern from January 17, 1972, identified Pasquale Franchi as his immediate superior and as the executive head of both companies. Eastern, he said was formed for the purpose of hiring non-union help and was primarily a management firm, with the actual work being done by subcontractors including the Franchi Construction Co.

The close relationship between the two companies did not, however, result in the keeping of accurate records detailing the progress of the work. Not only is it impossible to tell who was in charge at any one time there are major gaps in the field reports prior to the middle of January 1972. These reports were to be made out and filed each day by the licensed builder serving as superintendent. They briefly



describe the work done that day, and if filled out properly and regularly they should produce an accurate picture of the progress of the project on any given date .

Among the reports missing from the files are those for the dates from August 6, 1971 to September 24, 1971

This is the same period during which Stahl Associates and Le Messurier Associates were off the job; and it is the same period in which we believe the duct openings were made in the basement walls. Furthermore, the records of neither corporation actually show how much work was done by the date of the fire

The absence of field reports is significant in that without them it becomes difficult if not impossible to determine accurately who did what and when. The lack of these reports can cover a multitude of sins and in every major project it must be of prime importance to each building inspector to check on their proper preparation and filing.

IV. Conclusions by State Fire Marshal Joseph G. Sneider

On the basis of all that we have seen, we draw the following conclusions:

1. The collapse of the southeast section of the Vendome was the result of a masonry failure at the base of a central bearing column, overstressed as the result of unrecorded structural changes made 90 years ago. Although the precise dynamics of the failure are not known, if the fire had not occurred on June 17, the southeast section of the building would not have collapsed on that date, because the fire added enough to the existing conditions to bring about the collapse. The cutting of a duct



opening above an existing doorway in the basement masonry wall below the column some nine months earlier was a factor associated with the collapse, but in and of itself was not the cause of the collapse.

2. The architect and structural engineers allowed themselves to be relegated to lesser roles than the complexity of the renovation project required, with the result that information about the building was not assembled or acted upon as quickly or as thoroughly as possible. The owner and builder failed to maintain orderly supervision of the project, including the keeping of records adequate to document the work done. Although the actions of none of them caused the fire or the collapse, each pursued courses of conduct not in keeping with the best interests of the public.

3. As to the owner, architects, engineers, and builder, and as to the Building Department, the administrative aspects of the project were slipshod and inappropriate to a major renovation project in the heart of a great city.

4. The Boston Building Department played an insignificant role, measured against its responsibilities, in the issuance of the permits for the renovation of the Cafe Vendome and for the conversion of the remainder of the building. Permits were issued on the strength of tentative data without a requirement of subsequent filings for greater detail. Its subsequent inspection procedures were worthless. The Department failed to live up to what the public has a right to expect of it.

5. The Boston Fire Department by having men inside the Vendome on June 17, does not appear to have taken any risks greater than those regularly faced in fighting fires, particularly in light of the facts that the

fire was under control at the time of the collapse, there were no prior visible or audible signs that a collapse was likely, and no other parts of the building suffered structural failure leading to collapse.

6. The cause of the fire remains unknown, but there is no evidence of arson.

V. Recommendations by State Fire Marshal Joseph G. Sneider

1. No fire-fighters should be required to enter any vacant burning building unless the Department has been provided with sufficient data to support the conclusion that the building is structurally sound.

2. No building permits should be issued upon less than a full submission of plans and specifications. If the nature of the work entails the assembling of data after the work has begun, as in a renovation project, work should not be allowed to proceed beyond a set date until the additional data has been submitted to the building department. In all major projects, the Building Department should be able to set the minimum levels of architectural or engineering services needed, and the Department should have the right to stop any project in which such services are subsequently diminished or curtailed.

3. A closer relationship must be established between Building Departments and Fire Departments so that the experience and knowledge of both can be brought to bear on plans and specifications submitted for approval.

4. In projects of unusual complexity, whether new construction or



renovation, field inspection should be carried out by a new type of building inspector, superior in rank, training and compensation, whose jurisdiction should be determined by the nature of the project rather than its location in the municipality. Inspectors in this category should be employees of the Commonwealth in order to increase the flexibility of their assignments and to reduce the financial burden on the cities and towns. All building inspectors, nevertheless, should receive job training at least to the extent necessary to keep them abreast of current developments and problems.

5. Each municipality should undertake to establish and maintain a register of construction and renovation plans for every major building within its borders, with the duty to provide the needed data resting upon the owner.

6. The new State Building Code Commission should take note of this case and assign a high priority to the formulation of rules and regulations covering reconstruction and alteration of buildings, and the training of building inspectors, in order that a sound administrative system may be created for such projects at the earliest date.

