

Death Takes John W. Lieb

Senior Vice-President of New York Edison Company and Outstanding Pioneer of the Electrical Industry Was Widely Honored as Man, Engineer and Executive

JOHAN W. LIEB, senior vice-president of the New York Edison Company and an outstanding pioneer in the electric public utility field, died at his home in New Rochelle, N. Y., on November 1, at the age of 69 years. Mr. Lieb had been seriously ill for some weeks, and his death was not unexpected. It aroused wide regret among his associates in the high counsels of the industry and on the part of others with whom he had labored in various fields.

Born in Newark, N. J., in 1860, he was graduated from the Stevens Institute of Technology in 1880, and for a short while worked as a draftsman for the Brush Electric Company of Cleveland. In 1881 he was made an assistant in the engineering department of the Edison Electric Light Company, just organized in New York, and in the following year was put in charge of the installation of the electrical equipment of the pioneer Pearl Street station. On the inauguration of regular electric service on September 4, 1882, Mr. Lieb was appointed first electrician of the Edison Electric Illuminating Company of New York.

In 1883 young Lieb was chosen by Mr. Edison to supervise the erection and operation of a station for the Italian Edison Company in Milan, Italy. There, by dint of ability and indefatigable industry, he forged to the front and became a recognized leader in promoting the electrical development of that country.

At the invitation of the president of the Edison Electric Illuminating Company of New York, Mr. Lieb returned to the United States in 1894 and was made assistant to the vice-president, and subsequently he became vice-president and general manager of the company.

On the organization of the New York Edison Company Mr. Lieb was made associate general manager with the late Thomas E. Murray, and he eventually became vice-president and general manager of the company. Last year, when the Brooklyn Edison Company was brought under the control of the Consolidated Gas Company (owner of the New York Edison and its associated electric companies in the metropolitan district) and M. S. Sloan became president of the combined electric properties, Mr. Lieb relinquished the active duties of management to become senior vice-president.

Throughout his life Mr. Lieb took a prominent part in the work of many of the organizations in the electrical and allied fields. He was a past-president of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers, the National Electric Light Association, Association of Edison Illuminating Companies, Edison Pioneers and the New York Electrical Society, and a member of the Amer-

ican Society of Civil Engineers, the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, of which he was a vice-president; the Illuminating Engineering Society; the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the New York Academy of Science, the Franklin Institute and other technical bodies, besides being a trustee of the Stevens Institute of Technology, his Alma Mater.



John W. Lieb

Intense as Mr. Lieb's activities were, they were largely confined to the one industry to which he had devoted his life. He thought, however, in national and international dimensions. While local and national utility problems naturally gripped his attention, international relations commanded much of his time and thinking. He was a member of the Institution of Electrical Engineers of Great Britain, the Elektrotechnischer Verein of Germany and the Associazione Elettrotecnica Italiana and represented many American professional and technical organizations in international conferences. Besides taking part in the deliberations of foreign societies (he spoke four languages fluently), Mr. Lieb was an outstanding figure in the promotion of amity, peace and good will among the technical and engineering men of the world.

The eleven years spent in Milan broadened Mr. Lieb's viewpoint and quickened his literary and artistic taste. It even reflected itself in his personal appearance. He became a devotee of the celebrated Leonardo da Vinci, and the lamp posts which he installed on returning to New York reveal a very serviceable application of Italian artistry.

In any discussion of regulation and rates Mr. Lieb was right at home, both from his study of the theory of regulation and his practical knowledge of its administration and the application of service schedules.

In 1923 Mr. Lieb was awarded the Edison medal by the American Institute of Electrical Engineers for his achievement in the development and operation of electric central stations for illumination and power. His Alma Mater honored him with the degree of doctor of engineering, and the King of Italy bestowed on him the decoration of Knight Commander of the Order of the Crown of Italy.

Whatever else history may record of John W. Lieb, it will write him down as a wise and prudent operator who embodied all the traditions of the electrical industry for service. Many will recall his distinguished services for the industry at the time the United States entered the World War. The utilities were confronted with overwhelming demands for electricity owing to the exigencies of that titanic struggle. Fuel, equipment, labor and money were scarce and rationed, and the resources of the public utility companies had to be pooled. Mr. Lieb was chosen wartime president of the National Electric Light Association and threw himself into the work of preparedness with his customary vigor and earnestness, and the accomplishments of the utilities under the added urge of patriotism and sacrifice were nothing short of miraculous. Mr. Lieb showed operating and executive acuteness and energy during those trying times which impressed his associates and placed the industry under great obligation to him. He showed in the wider sphere those qualities which those who knew him had already found in him.

Leaders of the Industry Pay Tribute to Lieb

The death of Mr. Lieb brought out expressions of regret and respect that were more than nation-wide. A few written tributes from leaders of the industry and close associates in America, including Thomas A. Edison, and cabled expressions from eminent Italian engineers follow:

From THOMAS A. EDISON:

"John W. Lieb was one of my most able assistants, and in the early days I used him in the development of the Pearl Street central station. He was a most energetic and active man and had such a comprehensive understanding of my electric lighting system that I selected him to go over to Italy and establish the Milan central station. He made a great success of the installation and of the introduction of the system in Italy. One of his notable achievements was the lighting of La Scala, the great opera house in Milan. His work in Italy was of a pioneering nature and