

of materials, methods and equipment in the construction of his building necessary to the safety of the public and contemplated in the Act.

Another unfortunate feature of the Act is, as we have stated, that of leaving too much to the judgment of the building inspector. Public buildings now open to the public are required to conform with the regulations only to the extent deemed advisable and necessary by the inspector. The law suggests certain safety devices such as fire escapes and adds "or other means of safety, in case of fire, approved or prescribed by the inspector." It states further that this law respecting fire escapes shall not apply to any public building that is fireproof to the "satisfaction of the inspector." Again, such safety contrivances shall be installed at the places "directed by the inspector," and built in a manner "specified in his order." It requires that all buildings hereafter built or altered to serve as theatres shall be fireproof, "to the satisfaction of the building inspector."

Why the necessity of going to the trouble of making laws designed to specify what shall constitute proper equipment for the safety of human life in public buildings, if it is to be left with the discretion of the building inspector as to whether they are to be complied with or not? Why not simply empower the building inspector to order such precautions as he in his own judgment thinks necessary and simplify matters?

It is a grave mistake to permit a building inspector to make exceptions in the enforcement of building laws at his own discretion. His position carries with it too many dangers of graft and other illegitimate influences in any case without increasing this danger by placing in his hands laws of an inexplicit nature that may be used as a club or a favor. The zeal of an inspector is not a dependable quantity at the best. He should therefore be given rigid, explicit laws; he should be backed up in his strict enforcement of the regulations and be held responsible by law for his negligence in either permitting or failing to punish any infraction of the law.

FEATURES OF QUEBEC'S NEW LAW—SCHOOLS AND HOTELS MUST HAVE FIRE ESCAPES—BUILDINGS MAY BE PLACARDED "DANGEROUS."

SOME INTERESTING and praiseworthy features are to be found in the Quebec law respecting safety in public buildings, apart from its being too inexplicit in some particulars and leaving too much to the discretion of the building inspector.

Within the meaning of this act the term public buildings includes churches and chapels, or buildings used as such, seminaries, colleges, convents, monasteries, school-houses, public or private hospitals, orphan asylums, infant asylums, charity work-rooms, hotels, boarding houses capable of receiving at least fifteen boarders, theatres, halls for public meetings, lectures or amusements, buildings for the holding of exhibitions, stands on race-courses or other sporting grounds, buildings in parks, skating rinks, rooms for showing moving pictures, buildings of three stories or more over the ground floor occupied as offices, stores employing at least ten clerks and court-houses.

It requires that every building of at least three stories, and every school building shall be provided with safety appliances on the outside; such as iron stairs, safety tubes of canvas or metal, or other means of safety in case of fire, approved or prescribed by the inspector.

It provides that safety staircases shall be built of iron with sufficient side railings, and shall be connected with the inside of the building by means of doors or windows; and shall also have sufficient railings at each story

above the first, including the attic when it is used as a workshop, and shall be kept in good condition and unobstructed.

Canvas tubes shall consist of tubes made of strong canvas, treated chemically and so as to offer sufficient resistance to fire. Such tubes shall be solidly fixed to an iron frame and shall be supplied with brakes to check the descent.

Metal tubes shall consist of tubes of metal or sheet iron, of spiral form, and connected to each story by galleries.

All balconies, galleries and staircases must be put at the places and in the manner determined by the inspector. Canvas tubes shall be placed in portable chest and installed in the places determined by the inspector.

When the windows or other outlets opening upon the safety staircases, are more than two feet above the floor, steps shall be placed so as to enable the occupants of the building to easily reach such outlets.

The safety exits shall always be kept in good condition, and free of all obstruction whatever.

The regulations contained in the Act affecting hotels and boarding houses is rendered especially interesting at this time, just after the fatal hotel fire at Tillsonburg. If such a law had been in force in Ontario every guest would have been safely conveyed from the burning building to the street.

It requires all hotels and boarding houses of three stories or more to be equipped with regulation fire escapes and that the doors from which exit is had, as well as all doors at the lower part of the staircase, shall open outwards and shall never be locked with a key, but shall be supplied with a lock which opens automatically by pressure from within the building.

It further provides that the inspector may require that there shall be a night guardian in every hotel or boarding house having fifty occupied rooms.

The passages and staircases shall be lighted throughout the night. The lamps indicating the safety exits shall be supplied with glasses of glass colored differently from that of other lamps.

The proprietors are required to post in each room, a notice containing the information necessary to enable the occupants to find their way to the supplementary exits and to use the extinguishers and safety appliances.

There must be a sounding gong or other alarm appliance to wake the occupants at night in case of fire.

Proprietors of hotels which accommodate at least fifteen boarders are required to have their house inspected and obtain a certificate attesting that all the precautions for the safety of the boarders and employees have been taken, as required by law and by the regulations. The certificate shall be issued in duplicate, and the proprietor, after having posted one of them in a conspicuous place in his house shall keep the other at the disposal of the inspector of provincial revenue of the district. Such certificates are to be given by the inspector free of charge, and the collector of provincial revenue shall not grant a license until after the certificate has been obtained.

Another feature of the act is that portion which empowers the building inspector to close theatres and amusement halls, the proprietors of which do not comply with the regulations of the act, and to post at the entrance of such building, in a conspicuous place, a placard indicating that the building is dangerous.

The act generally is a step in the proper direction; and it should form the nucleus of broader and more far reaching legislation controlling building construction and equipment in the other provinces of the Dominion. Without such laws we can never expect to have buildings constructed along lines that give any measure of protection against the loss of human life.