THE INSURANCE CHRONICLE.

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ASSESSMENT ASSURANCE.

The principle underlying assessment insurance companies is not fully understood. Unfortunately, the proportion of members who help to manage the affairs of the orders is smaller still. So it is difficult to bring good business sense, let alone actuarial or insurance knowledge, to bear on their management. A large annual gathering of an assessment society, whose members think they are getting safe insurance at low rates, are not easily persuaded of the necessity of paying more. Hence the difficulties, which began many years ago, of the A.O.U.W., the Macabees, the Royal Arcanum, the I.O.F., and many other bodies.

To convince members that higher rates were needed cost time, money, and loss of membership. This sort of thing will continue to go on, says a contemporary, "primarily, because the men who get up these life-insurance-at-cost schemes, plus fraternalism, insist on experimenting with the guesses and mistakes of those who have preceded them."

So well known is this indisposition of the fraternal member to increase his rate of contribution, even when it is proved to him to be necessary, that it is shrewdly doubted if even the National Fraternal Congress, in the United States, and its congener, the Associated Fraternities of America, can secure agreement upon the changes they find necessary and the united action they desire. The Senate of Massachusetts has a bill which provides for the examination of fraternal bodies, and for the holding as reserve of a sum not less than the unearned portion of the premiums on policies in force. Ex-Superintendent Kelsey, in his report of the New York Insurance Department for 1908, considers it proper that regular provisions of law should govern the fraternals in a manner similar to those of legal reserve companies.

It can scarcely be, one would think, that the ignorance or stubbornness of the members, unable to understand or unwilling to obey the recommendations of their advisers, shall continue to stand in the way of such bodies taking steps to render safe what they have undertaken in the way of future payments.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION IN CANADA.

Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec are Preparing Bills—Accidents in Relation to Age.

The workmen's compensation scheme has made rapid progress in this country during the past few months. Until the present year, British Columbia was the only province of the Dominion where there was a distinct workmen's compensation act in force, in Saskatchewan the liability of employers for injuries received by their workmen being provided for in the Ordinance of 1900. Alberta has fallen into line with the Pacific Province; and in Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec similar bills relating to this question are being prepared and will be introduced into the respective legislatures during the course of a year. A workmen's compensation bill was brought down in Ontario last session, but was withdrawn in order that more study might be given to the question.

Findings of Royal Commission.

The Quebec Government have been at great pains to produce a bill which shall satisfy the requirements of the case and, at the same time, afflict no hardship upon either of the parties concerned. Eighteen months ago a Royal Commission, consisting of Mr. Arthur Globensky, K.C., secretary of the Provincial Bar Association; Mr. C. B. Gordon, vice-president of the Dominion Textile Company; and Mr. Felix Marcis, secretary of the Provincial Labor Department, was appointed to enquire into the laws governing the question in many countries. The members have heard much testimony representing the views of both capital and labor, and embodied their conclusions in a comprehensive report, which has recently been submitted. The commissioners lay upon employers the responsibility for all kinds of accidents without regard to contributory negligence on the part of the workmen, and the latter are held to be entitled to compensation for all kinds of injury sustained in the course of their employment unless the said injury is due to wilful acts of their own. In the past, Quebec provincial laws have recognized the liability of employers for workmen to the extent only to which employees were able to prove the negligence and culpability of employers in the matter of defective machinery, etc. It is upon these recommendations that the Quebec Government is preparing the draft of the proposed bill.

Domestics and Agriculturists Excluded.

The measure to be discussed in the Manitoba legislature this session is substantially the same as the one introduced last year, excepting that domestic and agricultural servants are exempted from its provisions, as is the case in Alberta. The Government has not yet announced its attitude towards the measure, which it advised to be withdrawn after it reached the committee stage last session. The bill has now been submitted to the Trades and Labor Council for an opinion.

The fact that the measure conforms with that of Alberta in exempting employers of agricultural labor from its provisions is sufficient to ensure the hostility of that body. The Trades and Labor Council of Alberta, as stated last week, regard this section as immoral and unjust, contending that the agricultural wage earners should be entitled to the same protection as the industrial worker.

While labor interests are busy agitating for amendments to the Act, the employers, with grievances of their own, are not remaining idle. They have formed at Edmonton what is known as the Central Employers' Association, which is circulating a petition setting forth their side of the case.

Menace to the Industries.

The opinion is expressed that the Act will work a great hardship upon the industries of Alberta from their being no limit for payments in the case of personal non-fatal injuries. It is further contended that it is impossible to get an insurance company to assume the full liability according to the Act at anything like reasonable cost. In British Columbia, it may be pointed out, the Act limits the liability to $1,500 for death or for injuries not resulting in death. The Employers' Association claim that without this limitation the Act becomes a menace to all employers of labor. As an instance of this, they state that in England, where a similar clause to that in the Alberta Act is in effect, the omission of a limitation proviso has resulted in an enormous burden upon employers in cases of permanent disability.

It cannot justly be said that the English Act has been a success. It has, in the opinion of some authorities, completely failed in its cardinal object. That was to lessen the number of accidents by the greater safeguards which it was hoped employers would adopt. The opposite to this has happened. The Act became law in 1898; ten years later we find Parliament discussing "the recent alarming increase of accidents," and the Home Secretary appointing a committee to deal with the matter.

Cause of Increased Accidents.

The employers themselves are largely to blame for this state of affairs. The chief cause of the increase of accidents has been the elimination of the elderly workmen. The "too old at forty" idea has been proved an egregious fallacy, and in turning adrift their experienced workmen—often at the instigation of the insurance companies—employers have been pursuing a policy as short-sighted as inhuman. Those who have given preference to young and inexperienced men have had to pay the penalty in growing costs in respect of accidents or insurance premiums.

In support of this argument, some figures recently sent to the London Times by a large employer of labor relating to