

selling value \$5,295,345. Throughout 1917 the increased activity was fully maintained, the record for the 12 months ending December 31st being 789,055 acres, with total sale price of \$14,330,811. Reports now coming down from the West are that the Canadian Pacific land offices are doing a record-breaking business. The tide of American settlers, which reached its height in the year ending March, 1913, when 139,000 people came in from the neighboring country, had steadily declined during the three succeeding years. In 1914 the Americans settling in Canada numbered 107,530; in 1915, 59,779; and in 1917 (year to March 31st), 36,937. During the year ending March, 1918, there was a substantial increase, and the newspaper dispatches from western centres state that most of the newcomers thronging the land offices recently are Americans—from California, the Middle West and New England.

It is, of course, well understood that the revival in Canadian Pacific land sales and in immigration from the United States is mainly due to the high price of wheat. Assured of getting around \$2 per bushel for what they can produce in 1918, and confident that the prices realized in 1919 and 1920 will also be satisfactory, those having experience in farming naturally turn their attention to the cheap lands of our prairie provinces. Nowhere in the United States can lands of this quality be purchased at the Canadian prices. In most cases the prices current on the other side of the boundary line are from two to four times as great as in Saskatchewan and Alberta. This movement of Americans into Canada promises to have an important effect on our grain production in 1918 and 1919. Many of the new settlers have planned to break some land and plant a crop during the present spring; and it is certain that their efforts will result in a substantial increase of the area seeded in 1919. A satisfactory feature of the new immigration movement is that it has attained its volume in spite of the relatively poor yields of 1916 and 1917. In many parts of Manitoba and Saskatchewan the farmers in those two years received but a small yield of grain per acre. If under those circumstances the high prices attracted many settlers from the United States, we may reasonably anticipate that the combination of a big crop and high prices, when it materializes, will have a pronounced effect in building up the agricultural population of Western Canada. The favorable conditions under which the farmers have worked since taking off their last harvest have created a general expectation that the combination here referred to may be experienced in 1918.

SAVINGS BANK CHECKING ACCOUNTS

In view of the recent intimations to the effect that the banks have been considering a change of practice in regard to allowing savings bank customers to draw cheques upon their accounts, bank depositors have been discussing the probable effects of such a change. The savings bank checking account is of comparatively recent origin so far as the Canadian chartered banks are concerned. It is largely a result of banking competition and of the policy of establishing numerous branch offices in the residential and retail sections of the larger cities. To the average householder living uptown, the privilege of having a savings account at a bank a few doors away on which cheques might be issued payable anywhere in the city, has had a strong appeal. The branches in the cities, outside of the financial district, have thousands of these accounts, many of which are carried for no other reason than that of issuing two or three cheques per month for

the purpose of paying the larger items of household expense. These savings bank checking accounts have been one of the main factors in developing the deposits of the city branches far beyond what they would have been if no such privilege existed. Thus they have been a factor in encouraging thrift and economical habits.

Because of their importance as deposit-builders, it is scarcely to be expected that the savings bank checking accounts will be abolished. Many branch managers would interpose a strenuous opposition to any proposals for doing away with them entirely. If the privilege were abolished, it is probable that a considerable number of the savings accounts bearing interest would be transferred to the current account ledgers, the interest payments ceasing. Hundreds of people have been educated to pay their accounts by cheque, and if they cannot do this by means of savings accounts they would do it by means of current accounts. But it may be taken for granted that a goodly number of the savings customers who have become accustomed to issuing a few cheques per month will never go back to the old method of attending in person at the bank to draw out the actual currency and then pay their larger monthly bills by cash. This would be a backward step, and it would not economize the labor in the bank. It is far better and more economical for all parties to have payments made by cheque, providing the amounts are not too small.

On the other hand, it is clear that many of the customers who have checking accounts in the savings department abuse their privilege—through issuing too many cheques. A savings bank account should not be active. Many bankers consider that if there is a steady balance of from \$200 to \$300, the bank can properly allow three or four cheques per month; but that accounts through which numerous cheques are passed should be in the current ledger, even if a fairly large balance is carried. In case of parties having large balances who wish to issue numerous cheques, the banks usually arrange for them to carry their funds in the current account ledger, stipulating for a free balance large enough to cover the cost of operating the account and give a profit; or the dormant portion of the balance may go into the savings ledger and an amount sufficient to carry the checking account is kept at all times in the current ledger.

INCREASE IN FIRE INSURANCE RATES

Many readers must have been interested in the announcement in the daily papers referring to increases in rates made by the fire insurance companies.

The fire insurance companies operating in the United States have followed the plan of making a general increase of 10 per cent. upon all the rates which they had been charging prior to the first of this year, and when the companies here recognized that an increase in rates was necessary, it was at first proposed to follow that plan, but after full consideration of the situation, it was decided that it would be better to increase rates in certain districts where the fires had been unusually prevalent and upon certain classes of risks where the losses have been frequent and severe. There have also been increases made in some towns where the fire apparatus has not been kept in good order.

The statistics furnished to the Dominion government during the last few years, of the premiums received and losses paid by insurance companies in the different provinces, show that in Ontario particularly the companies have been losing money. Taking into consideration the present high cost of building and for replacement of