

**Fire Insurance** The City of Winnipeg can boast, if at Winnipeg, boasting is allowed in such a case, that it has one fire insurance company operating in its borders for each 1,200 of inhabitants. The people seem to have become alive to the economy and other advantages of a thoroughly adequate Water Works' system, as they have approved a by-law authorizing the City Council to establish such a system, which for its more complete efficiency requires to be owned and worked by the municipality.

**The Spoils System and Insurance Commissioners.**

A large amount of the space of some of the insurance journals of the United States is taken up with the discussion of affairs arising out of disputes between insurance company, presidents and managers, and some insurance commissioner. The Kansas Superintendent of Insurance seems to enjoy being in conflict with some of the companies operating in that State, and judging from the lively remarks of the President of the Travellers' the battle between the State and the Company officials is more irritating and wasteful of time than damaging to the latter. It is, however, a scandal to insurance in the States for such conflicts to be frequently going on, as on one side there are charges made of dishonorable practices, and on the other side accusations of black-mailing. The whole of these troubles arise out of the spoils' system, which is developing in Canada far more than is good for the public service. The *N. Y. Mail & Express* says:

Never in the history of State supervision of insurance has there been a more outspoken and apparently just opposition to its administration than at the present time. There are about forty State Insurance Departments, with, of course, a like number of superintendents or commissioners. These officials come and go with the political tide. Their appointments do not depend in any way upon a special fitness for an intelligent discharge of the duties of the departments in which they are placed. Each has his own notion as to what he may do."

If a Commissioner takes advice from the State Attorney-General, such advice is likely to be overriden by that official's successor in office, as they are subject to the spoils' system. Our contemporary adds:

Thus there is constantly confusion worse confounded. What with verdant and not always virtuous commissioners coming along with new requests, each often differing in character and cost, the managers of companies doing a general business throughout the country can never feel with any degree of certainty safe for a single day from irritating interference and unlimited annoyances. To company managers this burden is becoming well nigh unbearable."

In Canada our able and generally esteemed Superintendent of Insurance proceeds with his responsible duties undisturbed by political changes, and uninfluenced by thoughts suggested by a knowledge of his early removal after the next Election. Hence his whole proceedings are business-like, and dictated wholly by a high sense of duty. Now that

the better minds in the States are favoring and advocating some restraint being placed upon the spoils of office system, the evils of which are so glaring and mischievous, it is unfortunate that Canada which has so far been free from this reproach should be giving signs of a movement to adopt this baneful system in this country.

**A National Insurance Bureau for U.S.**

The *New York Bulletin* announces that Senator Platt, of Connecticut, has introduced a bill to establish a division in the Treasury Department for the regulation of insurance among the several States. The bill is very comprehensive, covering twenty-one sections. It applies to all insurance companies doing business outside of the State in which they are organized, but an exemption is made of strictly beneficial orders. The head of the proposed division is to be known as the United States Commissioner of Insurance, to be appointed by the President for a term of four years. He is to inquire into the management and financial condition of all the insurance corporations and is given broad powers of investigation. Beginning with January, 1899, he is to secure from all life insurance companies a list of life policies then in force, their value, etc. A Government actuary is provided to compute valuations, and a small charge is made on the insurance companies to cover this item of expense. The Commissioner is also to keep track of foreign laws relating to insurance, to prohibit insolvent companies from doing interstate business, etc. It is to make similar reports as to fire insurance companies. Our contemporary says that United States Underwriters fear there will be "another expensive department added to the present burden." The opinion of prominent insurance officials is said to be that "insurance should be put flatly on the basis of inter-State commerce, as otherwise more trouble and expense will be involved without an equivalent." The present plan seems to us greatly in need of systemization as the Commissioner of each State acts largely on his own lines without much regard to the working and arrangements of the other State officials. It is only too notorious that the companies have been harassed by certain Commissioners in a most annoying manner, owing to their insisting upon the observance of rules which are not generally in force. Such a National Bureau would lay down a system to be observed throughout the whole of the States, and would greatly conduce to the harmonious working of the companies with the State officials.

The Directors of the Commercial Bank, Newfoundland, are now on trial before Sir D. Chalmers, an English judge. The main charge against them is that they published false statements of the affairs of the bank, and declared a dividend of 9 per cent. and a bonus of 1 per cent. when they knew such a dividend had not been earned.