

FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU WANTED IN MONTREAL.

INFLUENTIAL DELEGATION WAIT UPON BOARD OF CONTROL—IN FAVOR OF RESTRICTING SMOKERS.

An influential delegation representing the various bodies who are interested in the fire prevention movement which has lately been set on foot in Montreal waited upon the Board of Control on Tuesday, and made a number of important suggestions for the reduction of the fire waste. The various bodies represented were the Board of Trade, the Chambre de Commerce, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, the Canadian Fire Underwriters' Association, the Builders' Exchange and the Architects' Association. Their chief recommendation was for the establishment of a fire prevention bureau under the charge of the chief of the fire department and consisting of an inspector in each of the thirty-seven fire stations which at present exist in Montreal. The delegation also suggested considerable restriction of smokers on the ground that many fires are caused through their carelessness. It was eventually agreed that the delegation would prepare and submit to the Board a draft by-law, containing the different suggestions made.

The written petition laid before the Controllers was of considerable length. The more important clauses in the petition are as follows:

REDUCE THE HAZARD.

"The committee is unanimously of the opinion that a very great proportion of fires which occur in Montreal might be prevented by the enforcement of municipal by-laws requiring buildings to be so constructed as would reduce the hazard of fires to a minimum, and also regulating the maintenance and care of buildings in order to guard as far as possible against an outbreak of fire. At the present time the committee understand there is practically no inspection of business premises on the part of the city for the purpose of seeing the by-laws actually in force are observed, and further that the investigation of the causes of fires which have occurred is not carried on with that promptness and efficiency which might make them of value.

"The committee would therefore suggest that a fire prevention bureau under the control of the fire department for the prosecution of this work be established; that this bureau comprise a staff of not less than thirty-seven competent inspectors, there being thirty-seven fire stations in the city), whose duties should include the frequent inspection of all buildings and premises to see that the by-laws regarding the cleanliness of premises, the removal of waste, the disposal of hot ashes, and generally all by-laws dealing with the hazard of fire be strictly enforced. The inspectors should have authority to enter any building and to bring an action against any person or persons who fail to observe the regulations established. The entire time and energy of the staff should be occupied in making these inspections.

"The committee are of the opinion that all matters which have any relation whatever to the safeguarding of life and property from fire, including the erection and maintenance of fire escapes and all other appliances should be within the jurisdiction of the fire department, which is in close touch with and has a better knowledge of conditions in that respect than

any other branch of the municipal service. Also the duplication in inspection work might be thus avoided.

WOULD RESTRICT SMOKING.

"Further, the committee consider that a prolific cause of fire is smoking and would recommend that regulations be framed which would absolutely prohibit smoking by employees in factories, workshops, buildings under construction, warehouses, places of amusement, departmental and wholesale stores, and similar buildings. Employers should be required to keep notices signifying such prohibition conspicuously posted in their premises. Provision for adequate punishment of offenders should be made. It is thought that it would be unnecessary to extend this prohibition to retail stores or office buildings.

"The regulation regarding the storage of inflammable articles and explosives should be strengthened and provision made for their strict enforcement."

SUBSTANCE OF PETITION.

The substance of the petition is summed up under the following heads:

"1. That there is enormous loss of life and property, one-half of which is caused by preventable fires.

"2. That there is a serious misconception of the conditions to consider that the fire waste only concerns the insurance companies.

"3. That the destruction of property by fire means an irreconstructible loss of values and is frequently the cause of serious disturbance in business conditions, which is far-reaching in its effect.

"4. That while it is important that our water supply and the fire-fighting system should be maintained in the highest possible state of efficiency, every means possible should also be used to prevent the inception of fires.

"5. That the recognition of individual responsibility is absolutely necessary to minimize the hazard and to bring this about it is necessary to educate the public by the enforcement of proper by-laws, carrying with them a penalty where other means fail."

WESTERN CONDITIONS BRIGHTENING.

Mr. A. R. Howell, manager for Canada, Gresham Life Assurance Society, returned to Montreal at the beginning of this week from one of his periodical trips to the West. Mr. Howell, who went through to the Coast, states that while things are dull at the present time in Vancouver, in the Prairie provinces they are considerably more hopeful than they were a few months ago, thanks to the crops. However, there will be a fairly long haul before things get back to the condition of general activity prevalent a year or two ago, and probably, when that condition of activity returns, it will be on considerably more conservative lines than the activity of the past. Of the remarkable future which lies before the West ultimately, there can, Mr. Howell thinks, be no manner of doubt, especially in view of the fact that up to the present only a very small percentage of the available arable land is under cultivation. Referring to the new taxation on banks, insurance and loan companies, which is being proposed, in Alberta Mr. Howell points out that without a doubt this tax will be transferred to the borrower, so that the provincial governments through this taxation are merely making money dearer for the farmers.

Mr. Howell also states that the Gresham Life is at the present time doing well throughout the West.