

CRITICAL REPORT ON TORONTO FIRE DEPARTMENT.

LACK OF SYSTEM AND BUSINESS METHODS IN EXECUTIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE BRANCH —DISCIPLINE AND TRAINING INEFFICIENT.

Fire underwriters will no doubt pay close attention to the report which has been made to Mayor Hocken, of Toronto, by Judge Denton, conveying the results of his investigation of the Toronto Fire Department. Judge Denton finds that there is a lack of system and business methods in the executive and administrative branch of the Department; discipline is loose-ened and the firemen are not well instructed.

Regarding the general efficiency of the Fire Department, Judge Denton says the evidence shows conclusively that there is a deplorable lack of system and business methods in the executive and administrative branch of the Fire Department.

"This," he says, "appears in every volume of the evidence taken and stares the department in the face at every turn."

His Honor finds that there is no filing system in use at headquarters for the preservation of correspondence; that the only maps of the water mains and hydrants of the city in the possession of the department are the plates of Goad's Atlas, on which the Works Department has marked them; that this set of plates is kept by Chief Thompson at headquarters, that the firehalls throughout the city have no map or plan of any kind showing the location or size of the mains or the location and style of hydrants; that no record is kept at headquarters of the fire boxes that each firehall shall respond to; that the Fire Chief keeps no record of the work he performs in connection with buildings about to be erected with a view to seeing that they are reasonably safe from being destroyed by fire.

NO INCREASE IN SECRETARY'S STAFF FOR 27 YEARS.

With the exception of a stenographer Judge Denton points out that there has been no increase in the staff of the Secretary's office since 1886, since which time the business of the department has increased sixfold.

Commenting on this his Honor says that a city which spends \$508,000 on its Fire Department as Toronto did in 1913 is, in his judgment, entitled to a better system than "one that abounds with telephone messages and other verbal communications, most of which should be in writing."

"It is obvious that written reports aid materially in fastening responsibility upon persons who otherwise might succeed in evading it at the expense of truthfulness."

DISCIPLINE LOOSE-REINED.

"Another matter that has impressed me in considering the evidence," comments the Judge, "is that the discipline and training of the men is not what it ought to be. The reins have not been tightly enough held, and the instruction of the men is capable of much improvement. There seem to be no definite instructions given to the men as to the location of the hydrants, or how to open them, or as to the location and size of the water mains. They pick up this knowledge in the course of their experience at fires and as best they can. No sufficient instruction is given to the men how to send in a general alarm."

"There is a slackness in the investigation of complaints and punishment of the offenders," says the Judge. "The reason for this weakness may be accounted for in part at least in the following way: Chief Thompson has been thirty-seven years in the force and has grown up with the men. He is a large-hearted, good-natured man. He knows nearly every man on the force so well that he calls them by their Christian names. Obviously it must be very difficult for him to exercise that strong discipline which must always be present in the most efficient fire brigade."

INSUFFICIENT TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION.

"The responsibility for any absence of system and business methods and slackness in discipline and insufficient training and instruction of the men must rest upon the shoulders of Chief Thompson. He quite frankly assumes all the responsibility. The city by-law and the rules issued thereunder give him complete control."

"There has been no evidence tendered upon which I can report that there has of late years been any interference on the part of the firemen in municipal elections, apart from casting their votes. There is evidence, however, of activity in political organizations. . . . It would appear that it is advisable that a by-law or rule should be passed prohibiting any member of the Fire Department from holding office in any political organization. In this Chief Thompson concurs, although he thinks it should be made to apply to all city officials."

Judge Denton concurs in the recommendation that there should be an age limit for compulsory retirement of active fire fighters. He does not think some officers' duties call for early retirement.

WOULD MAKE A FINE DEPARTMENT.

In conclusion Judge Denton says: "The evidence taken on this investigation leads me to believe that if a proper system and proper business methods were rightly applied to the executive and administrative branch of the work, and the reins of discipline more tightly held and the instruction and training of the men improved, Toronto would have a very efficient Fire Department."

"The officers and the rank and file have shown much courage and endurance, and I wish it clearly understood that in my opinion nothing has been proved in this investigation that should injuriously affect the right of any one of those men from the Chief down to obtain his retiring allowance if he is otherwise entitled to it."

These findings will be dealt with by the Toronto Board of Control at an early date. The appointment of a Board of Commissioners, similar to the Board of Police Commissioners to supervise the whole Department is being advocated in some quarters.

The annual report of the Canadian Northern Railway states that the last link in the chain of the new transcontinental railway, namely, the line through the Rocky Mountains will be completed early in 1914.

Gross earnings for the year were \$24,527,478, an increase of \$3,417,384; operating expenses were \$17,533,610, and net earnings \$7,023,867, an increase of \$802,822, or 15.18 per cent. Fixed charges were \$5,190,924, leaving a surplus of \$1,832,943. From this is deducted interest on income charge convertible debenture stock of \$988,214, leaving a net surplus of \$844,729.