

ness aspects as well as the engineering. It seems, however, obvious that the closing of the canals in winter would shut off an enormous volume of freight that goes by the river when it is open. This canal freight would still all go by rail, even if the winter boats were running. If the river is kept open all winter it will enlarge the period when ocean navigation generally is open, for the ice will move away sooner and more rapidly if a channel is prepared for its passage. In these days of engineering, daring and ingenuity, and of financial enterprise, it would be rash to pronounce the St. Lawrence winter channel either impracticable on mechanical grounds, or from monetary considerations. Let the experiment be made, if successful it will be a great benefit to the city, if otherwise we shall have lost nothing but a hope that proved unjustified.

UNIFORMITY OF PRACTICE.

In our last issue there appeared, in our editorial columns, an article headed "Uniformity of Practice." As stated by us in some comments on the Insurance Institute of Montreal, this was the paper read by Mr. B. Hal Brown, manager of the London & Lancashire Life Insurance Co., before the Institute on the 28th December last. Owing to the second part of the heading being accidentally omitted, there was nothing to show by whom the paper on "Uniformity of Practice" was written. We understand that the paper will appear in pamphlet form, and, we are sure, will cause the subject to be generally discussed.

AN IMPERIAL COUNCIL.

One of the natural outgrowths of the strong imperialistic feeling now prevalent is a desire to have some organization which will embody and give voice to the ideas and sentiments now so prominent. The British Empire League in Canada, which is supported by those who, for many years, have advocated a closer union between the Mother Country and her colonies, has become convinced of some body being organized more representative of imperial sentiment and movements, and more influential in giving vitality to the bonds of Empire. At a recent meeting of the executive of this league in Toronto, the following motion was moved by Mr. J. Herbert Mason, and Mr. Alex. McNeill, M.P., both of whom have for many years been ardent imperialists. The resolution reads:

"That this committee being in favour of the formation of an Imperial consultative council, urges strongly upon our Government and upon the league in England that an Imperial conference be called at an early date to consider the establishment of such a council, and to consider the questions of Imperial defence, Im-

perial preferential trade, Imperial cables, a uniform Imperial insolvency law, and such other subjects as may be agreed upon."

The resolution was cabled to the league in England, where action is expected to be taken at once. The desirability of the above questions being thoroughly discussed by men representing the business interests and the higher intelligence of the whole Empire will not be questioned. Several of the topics more especially concern the colonies, one regarding insolvency laws, is of particular interest to Canada and Canada's business connections. Imperial defence is a question upon which a debate will do no harm, if shared in by colonial representatives. The Imperial Government, doubtless, will be glad of information as to the needs and the feelings of the colonies in regard to their defence; but, it is doubtful whether any one not fully informed of the precise measures now in force for defending the Empire, and of the nature and location of its armaments is in a position to advise the home authorities on the defense question.

Imperial preferential trade is an exceedingly complicated problem. Each colony has its own mercantile interests to protect and develop; its own expenditures to meet out of customs revenues, and these imperative obligations and permanent conditions render it most difficult to formulate a tariff which will be adapted to the varied necessities of various colonies. There is also this insuperable difficulty. The Mother Country keeps her ports open for the free entry of the manufactured products of all nations, and, whatever customs duties she imposes are universal, there is no preference given to any importers, and the policy of free imports is not likely to be changed by Great Britain—at any rate not until colonial imports become very much greater in proportion to the whole than they are at present. The solution of the problem of Imperial Preferential Trade, seems, at present, to involve Free Trade throughout the whole Empire. There is no prospect of any such fiscal revolution being likely to take place throughout the British Empire.

An Imperial Insolvency law is another most unpromising subject. We, in Canada, have been trying for thirty years to get a Dominion law of insolvency passed, and we are still in the wood in this regard. The commercial interests, sentiments, and traditions of each part of the Empire differ so widely that the establishment of uniform fiscal and other trade regulations can hardly be regarded as practicable. At any rate not for a length of time.

Still we favour these questions being thoroughly discussed by such a representative body as the above resolution contemplates, as from their deliberations there would come a more general understanding amongst the colonies as to their respective conditions and needs.