

MUTUAL LIFE OF CANADA IN THE WEST.**Mr. Wegenast Indicates a Continuance of Present Loaning Policy—Impressions of an Inspection Trip.**

Mr. George Wegenast, the managing director of the Mutual Life of Canada, has recently concluded a month's inspection trip in the West, on which he was accompanied by Mr. P. D. McKinnon, provincial manager for the Mutual Life of Canada. Interviewed in Winnipeg at the close of his trip, Mr. Wegenast stated that there would be no change in the general policy of this important Company in the matter of loans, and that during the coming 12 months, the Company would continue to send large sums to the prairie provinces for investment there. The total amount now at loan in the prairie provinces by the Mutual Life was stated by Mr. Wegenast to be between ten and twelve million dollars, and additions will be made steadily to this sum in future years.

PLEASANT IMPRESSIONS.

In the course of the interview Mr. Wegenast observed: "My trip through the prairie provinces this year was in some respects the most pleasant since I first began to inspect our loans and to gain a personal acquaintanceship with the country. We travelled by automobile considerably more than a thousand miles in a single trip. We went out from Regina and crossing the Saskatchewan river at the elbow went through the fine district known as the Goose Lake country. We continued west and south to Swift Current, crossed the Canadian Pacific track, and toured the southern country returning to the Canadian Pacific line at Morse. A considerable portion of my duty each year consists in securing personal knowledge of new farming districts, where loans can safely be made. We have never gone into a new area until some representative of our Company has gone thoroughly over the ground and made this preliminary inspection. This was the object of my trip through the territory to which I refer. I must say of the crop that it seemed to me highly satisfactory, and the best of it is, that this year our farmers are securing and saving what their lands produce. I saw some districts where the yield was magnificent, running as high as 45 bushels to the acre. There were other districts where owing to the drought the yield was poor, say to bushels to the acre. On the whole, the crop is such that no legitimate interest in the West will suffer."

MONTREAL FIRE COMMISSIONER WANTS 35 ASSISTANTS.

Their Work would be to Ascertain Fire Origins—Commissioner would also Punish Careless Smokers.

Fire Commissioner Latulippe, of Montreal wants 35 assistants as special fire constables to examine the origins of fires. These men, in the Commissioner's opinion, should be placed one at each fire station, and their duty would be when a fire breaks out to reach it before the firemen, so as to locate, if possible, the origin of the fire before the evidence is destroyed.

CARELESSLY DROPPED MATCHES.

"Another reform that I am ardently anxious to have instituted," continued the Commissioner in a statement this week, "is to have a law passed making

it a crime to drop a match on the floor of a building which is occupied by other human beings. Not long ago a man here boldly admitted dropping a match still lighted beside a gasoline tank, which caused a fire, and yet there was, or is no law by which this man could be punished. I think that negligence of such a nature that causes the loss of thousands of dollars worth of property and endangers lives, should be constituted a crime. The existence of such a law would make people more careful as to what they did with matches."

CASES OF ARSON.

"Still another measure I would like to see taken in connection with fire investigation is that fire insurance companies should not pay fire insurance on losses before the fires have been investigated by the Fire Commissioners. Very often witnesses come here and tell us that they have already been paid their insurance before we have had time to investigate the fire and to find out if it was of criminal origin. Furthermore, one of the hardest tasks in criminal law is to obtain the conviction of a man on an arson charge. If we could only secure the conviction in cases where we are sure there has been crooked work done, the conviction would serve to prevent others from obtaining insurance by burning their property. But I will say that next to this cause of many fires that negligence is the prime factor, and I am for legislation that will inflict swift and direct punishment on those found guilty of causing fires by negligence of one kind or another."

THE UNION LIFE INVESTIGATION.

The official investigation into the affairs of the defunct Union Life of Toronto, has been opened with Mr. George Kappel, K.C., presiding. Evidence showed that during the entire career of the Union Life Company every year showed a deficit. The evidence of Mr. Harry Symonds, vice-president, and one of the original incorporators of the concern, showed that during the years when the National Agency affiliated with the Union Life there was a considerable interchange of assets between the two companies.

Official statements, as presented to the Government, showed losses amounting to \$1,453,007.75 between 1902 and 1912. Asked for an explanation of this condition of affairs, Mr. Symonds informed Mr. Masten, acting on behalf of the Government, that he attributed it to the heavy expenditure incurred by the company in an effort to gain a strong foothold in the insurance world. He explained that the National Agency had put money in the form of premiums on capital stock and made good the losses sustained by the Union Life. It was shown that during the year 1904 the sum of \$115,000 was paid in premiums by the agency. In this connection it was shown that eighty per cent. of the gross commissions of the National Agency were contributed to the Union Life Company, the remaining twenty per cent. going into the working expenses of the National Agency, and so enabling it to pay dividends to its own shareholders of from seven to ten per cent.

The enquiry has been adjourned until Monday, October 27.

On the petition of a small shareholder, an order has been issued for the winding up of the National Agency Company. It is claimed that there is a deficit of over a million and a quarter.