

CITY HALL PROCRASTINATION.

They have leisurely habits at the Montreal City Hall. At the beginning of last November, a fire took place at Point St. Charles, under circumstances which, combined with other recent developments, suggested to the Canadian Fire Underwriters' Association, the propriety of a request for an expert investigation into the administration of the City's water department. In this request, they were backed up by the Board of Trade and by the Montreal branch of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association. The Board of Control, to whom the request was first addressed, turned it down. In due course they reported to the aldermen, who, not agreeing with the Controllers, passed a resolution sending back the Controllers' report with a recommendation to them that they should report in favor of an enquiry.

At this stage there was a long pause, broken eventually by the publication of a lengthy statement by the Controllers re-affirming their previous decision and giving reasons therefor. In due course, this also got to the City Council and met with the same fate as the previous recommendation. The aldermen reiterated, in fact, their desire to have an enquiry.

There was another long pause here. At the last meeting of the Council, the C. F. U. A. wrote mildly enquiring whether the council will or will not give effect to its expressed opinion that the investigation asked for should be held. The letter was held over until the next meeting.

This is the present state of the case. Over three months have elapsed since the matter first came forward; nothing practical has yet been done; and apparently we are about as near to getting anything done as at the outset.

The reinsurance contract between the Sovereign Fire Assurance Company of Canada and the Globe & Rutgers Fire Insurance Company, of New York, has now been signed. By it the Globe & Rutgers reinsures all risks in the United States the Sovereign has under policies which expire on or before December 31, 1913. It is the intention of the Sovereign to cancel policies expiring after 1913.

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The common notion that the insurance companies pay the cost of fires is gradually giving way to an intelligent understanding of the fact that they are merely the collectors and distributors of the fire tax. They must recover from the public the sums they pay out in losses, plus the cost of conducting their business and a reasonable interest upon their capital. If they could not do this there would be no business of underwriting, and sufferers from fire would be relieved only by direct assessment upon their more fortunate neighbors. It is not certain that a year or two of such direct assessment would not be an admirable educative experiment. At present the cost of the fire tax is merged with everything we eat and drink, and wear, and the masses of the people are ignorant of the fact that they bear it.—Franklin H. Wentworth.

THE NORTH AMERICAN LIFE ASSURANCE COMPANY.

The North American Life Assurance Company, of Toronto, is again in the happy position of being able to report a record year. In 1912, more substantial gains than were ever before made in the history of the Company, now over 32 years old, were registered all along the line. New policies last year were 25 per cent. in excess of those for 1911; assets increased by nearly a million dollars and net surplus by 21 per cent. Policies in force now total nearly 50 millions. Such development is an excellent indication of the success of the policy directed by Mr. L. Goldman, the North American Life's well known first vice-president and managing director, to whom congratulations upon the results achieved by the operations of 1912 are in order.

To show in detail the work accomplished during 1912, it may be said that policies issued during the year, together with those revived, amounted to \$7,630,336, which shows the satisfactory increase over 1911 of \$1,500,000. Business in force was advanced to \$49,460,581. The cash income of the year also showed a gratifying advance, being about \$110,000 higher than in 1911 at \$2,404,757. The total outgo was \$1,568,346, and of this over \$1,100,000 was paid to policyholders or on their account. The payments for death claims were \$422,065; matured endowments, \$165,901; matured investment policies surrendered, \$258,316, and dividends to policyholders, \$166,368. The last-named show a satisfactory advance approaching \$20,000 over those paid in 1911, while it may be noted that during the past ten years the North American Life has distributed a total of \$1,165,388 by way of profits among its policyholders.

The assets of the company received a substantial accession during 1912, and at the close of the year stood at \$13,224,150, an advance upon the year-end total of 1911 of just over \$900,000. These assets include \$4,152,411, mortgages on real estate; \$4,695,950, bonds and debentures; \$1,863,457, stocks, and \$1,672,629, loans on policies. A particularly satisfactory feature regarding these investments is that they are taken into the balance sheet at book value and the market value of bonds, debentures and stocks, held at December 31, was actually over \$100,000 in excess of book value. Excluding this excess in market value over book value, the surplus to policyholders is \$1,576,046, an increase of \$276,000 over 1911.

These figures afford ample evidence of skilful management, and of a controlling policy which happily unites solid conservatism and sound progress. They are too an excellent augury of future years of expanding operations and a high degree of prosperity. Mr. George E. Williams is the district manager of the North American Life at Montreal, and in this city as throughout the Canadian field the Company's business is steadily extending.

A special general meeting of the shareholders of the Bell Telephone Company of Canada has been called for February 27, to authorize a by-law giving the directors power to issue additional bonds and debentures to the amount of \$3,750,000. The outstanding bonds of the company at present amount to \$6,399,000 and the paid-up capital to \$15,000,000.