LEGISLATION AFFECTING FIRE INSURANCE COMPANIES IN NOVA SCOTIA.

Two bills affecting the business of fire insurance were before the Nova Scotia Legislature during the session recently closed. One of these was the Revenue Bill, which embraced a clause increasing the taxation of fire insurance companies doing business in that Province from one per cent. to one and three-quarters per cent. of the premium income. The other was a measure to tax fire insurance agents, the tax varying according to the classification of the community, viz.: $10 in cities, $5 in towns, and $2 in country districts.

Life insurance agents have been taxed for some years under legislation relating to life insurance companies.

FIRE INSURANCE AND THE PUBLIC.

The address of President C. Buswell, delivered at the annual meeting of the National Board of Fire Underwriters, New York, was a notable discussion of outstanding features in fire insurance. He said in part :—

In opposititon to strange doctrine and the forces of disorder, fire insurance stands for conservation, which resists destruction and is a supporter of growth, as distinguished from conservatism, which opposes change. While supporting credits and stabilizing business fire insurance is constantly pointing the way toward betterment of conditions. Its calculation of premium rates provides an incentive for better construction; its engineers show how to improve cities; it promo[illegible] the adoption of better building codes; it runs down arson; it wages war on the American sin of carelessness. Because it was organized to perform these and other services, it was able, as was no other agency, to render the Government certain kinds of service of untold value during the war.

Referring to recent experiments in Government operation, which, he says, "served a valuable purpose in substituting exact information for theory upon the subject of Government ownership," Mr. Buswell further remarks: "Agitators, many of whom appear to be plentifully supplied with mysterious funds, are working in co-operation with politicians of a certain stripe and with a strange variety of so-called 'intellectuals' to bring about the destruction of established institutions, including the most fundamental industrial, commercial, and even social relations. As an answer to such doctrine, we assert upon the basis of demonstrated facts that in the United States, at least, the greatest good of the greatest number is assured when individual initiative is encouraged to its best endeavours; when such private business as has learned to read self-interest in the larger terms of public service, is fostered; when official supervision does not include interference beyond the point of protecting public rights."

LIFE INSURANCE BUSINESS IN 1919.

A Note of Warning.

The Weekly Underwriter, New York, says :—
Now and again, in the general chorus of jubilation over this year's unprecedented life insurance production, there may be heard a modest but earnest note of warning. It comes as a surprise. Apparently the vote is not unanimous as regards felicitations. There is fear among the very small minority that the flood may work something of destruction unless scrupulously watched. They contend that many men are taking out life insurance just now in a spirit of speculation, to secure them for two or three years against the threat of influenza, after which they will drop their coverage, with the consequence of inaugurating a discouraging and unusual lapse ratio. It is also hinted that in spite of unusually careful medical selection now being observed, the great writings of 1919 stand a good chance of producing abnormal losses. The first warning may, perhaps, be dismissed with little comment, but the second is worthy of consideration. The after-consequences of the influenza are far from negligible. Anyone who has had it is still subject to physical dangers even when recovery appears to be complete. During the first three months of 1919 the mortality of one prominent company has been double that of the first quarter of last year. Taken as a whole, the death rate of the country has been considerably higher up to the present time than it was in the same period of 1918. This is a serious matter, when it is remembered that the net decrease in the surplus of life insurance companies in 1918, chargeable chiefly to the influenza, was in excess of $37,000,000, as compared with the normal increase of some $40,000,000 usually experienced each year. Another element of apprehension, though it may be slight, undoubtedly attaches to the temptation to push production to its utmost while the "going is good." Insurance Superintendent Phillips, of New York, felt strongly the danger that lies here when he sounded an emphatic note of warning against the revival of high pressure methods in connection with the suspension of legal limitation upon writings. Perhaps these demurrers are by way of being deaths heads at the feast, but they are certainly salutary, and can stand consideration to advantage.

PERSONALS.

Mr. W. E. Baldwin, manager for Canada of the Continental Fire Insurance, has just returned from Winnipeg, where he made an exhaustive report of present conditions, as they are affected by the strike, further reference to the matter will appear in our next issue.