

**WESTERN ASSURANCE COMPANY.**

It is officially announced that the board of directors of the Western Assurance Company, Toronto, have appointed Mr. A. R. Pringle its Canadian fire manager. He will also retain his present position as assistant secretary. Mr. Pringle is well known as a competent fire insurance official, and his promotion with this fine old Canadian Company, which he has served for many years, will be most popular in insurance circles.

It is also announced that Major C. C. Wansbrough has been appointed an assistant secretary of the company. This gentleman, who has been overseas during the war, has been in the service of the Western for many years.

**PORT COLBORNE ELEVATOR EXPLOSION.**

At the inquest held recently on the eight victims of the Government elevator explosion at Port Colborne, startling evidence was given by T. S. Harvey, mechanical superintendent of the elevator. He said while dust fans were in operation at the time, the leads to the various lofts were closed, the only lead open being to the scales. He never had the leads open in taking in grain except by special slides. He said that had the lead been open 50 per cent. of the dust from the grain would have been taken away, thus very materially lessening the danger of an explosion.

"The grain we were receiving that day was from Chicago and was pretty dusty," said Harvey. "American grain is usually much more dusty than our Canadian wheat."

He added that the orders against fanning dust from grain emanated from the desire on the part of the shippers to avoid waste.

"So by not having the leads to the fans open the lives of those eight men were probably sacrificed," observed Crown Attorney Cowper, of Welland.

Harvey admitted that the danger of an explosion was increased.

"And to avoid loss in weight of grain somebody takes a high chance?"

"Yes."

Harvey's theory of the cause of the explosion was dust swimming in the air.

The Port Colborne explosion was one of the most disastrous of its kind to occur in America in two years and possibly might have been avoided by strict adherence to the "Safety First" principles which have been outlined for grain and elevator men after exhaustive investigations into the causes of grain dust explosions by the Bureau of Chemistry.

The Port Colborne elevator was constructed of fire-resistive material, being made entirely of steel

and reinforced concrete, and consequently the loss by fire was comparatively small. Ten men, however, lost their lives, four were severely burned and six others slightly injured. A barge beside the elevator was completely wrecked and it is estimated that nearly \$1,000,000 worth of damage was done to the elevator structure. In this instance the destruction was caused by a grain dust explosion, which occurred shortly after 1 o'clock in the afternoon on Saturday, August 9, just after the men had returned from dinner, and had started up the plant. The origin of the fire which ignited the dust started in an elevator leg. The elevator had a capacity of 2,000,000 bushels.

Investigation into the causes of the explosion, which it is said will seriously hamper the supply of grain for export, was started immediately by an inter-departmental commission appointed by Hon. J. D. Reid, Minister of Railways and Canals, of Ottawa. Lieut.-Col. C. N. Monsarrat, chief consulting engineer for the Department of Railways and Canals, and chief engineer in charge of the Quebec Bridge construction, is chairman of this commission, and the other members include Hon. A. St. Laurent, Assistant Deputy Minister of Public Works for Canada; John Murphy, electrical engineer of the Department of Railways and Canals, and D. W. McLochlan, chief engineer for the Hudson Bay Terminal Dock and Harbor and engineer for the Department of Railways and Canals.

The Port Colborne elevator belonged to the Canadian Government and was operated by the Department of Railways and Canals. W. J. Fawcett, superintendent, was not in the building at the time of the explosion, but D. S. Harvey, mechanical superintendent, was in the elevator and was badly burned. Dr. H. H. Brown, of the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., who, with D. J. Price, of the same department, is carrying on the Grain Corporation work to prevent similar grain dust explosions in the United States, went to Port Colborne immediately after the explosion and has been assisting the Canadian officials in determining its causes.

An amusing story was told at a Highland gathering recently by Andrew Carnegie concerning two Scotsmen. They were sitting at ease in their favourite hostelry, and their conversation turned on the subject of pleasure. "I dinna ken just what real pleasure may be," said one gloomily. "There's always summat to spoil things for you." "How do you mak' that oot?" asked the other. "Well, tak' smokin', for instance. If yer smokin' yer ain baccy, ye're thinkin' of the awfu' expense, and if ye're smokin' some ither body's yer pipe is rammit so tight it winna draw."