

lines and the number of messages conveyed there are serious discrepancies. Thus, Russia has 98,331 miles of telegraphs, which is nearly double the length of those in Great Britain, but the Russian messages are only 22 per cent. of the British.

The United States telegraphs extend 227,143 miles, which is $4\frac{1}{2}$ times the length of those in Great Britain, but the British messages are equal in number to those in the United States. Belgium has only 4,100 miles of telegraphs, which equals 4.2 per cent. of the length of these in Russia, but the messages in Belgium amount to 70 per cent. of those in Russia.

France with lines equalling 180 per cent. of those in Great Britain, has messages only equal to 57 per cent. of those in Great Britain.

The United Kingdom, and Australasia lead the world in their ratio of telegraph messages to population.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIGH INSURANCE RATES?

The discussions over the alleged misappropriations of money by officials of the Equitable Life Insurance Society have brought out some highly imaginative comments on the business of insurance. The cost of life assurance is said to have been greatly enhanced by the amount of the personal gains derived from the business by officials which are declared to have been improperly received. If any one who thinks so will ascertain how much is the total annual sum of what is alleged to have been misappropriated and compare it with the total annual premiums he will discover that such premiums could not have been reduced more than a very slight fraction per cent. had every dollar alleged to have been misused gone into the Society's funds.

The cost of both life and fire insurance is regulated mainly by the public. Were they to act in concert in an effort to reduce insurance rates they would certainly succeed. By adopting in regard to their insurance the same course as they adopt in their other business affairs they would reduce the cost of insurance so materially as to bring rates down to a lower level.

One of the main factors in keeping up insurance rates is, the cost of obtaining and retaining the business. If all dry goods stores had to keep up a staff of agents perpetually on the look out for customers upon each of whom they had to wait time and time again before making a sale and if each of these customers had to be kept constantly in touch with the store, the expenses of conducting a dry goods business would be so large as to necessitate all the goods being so priced as to provide a margin to cover these heavy expenses.

Reversing the illustration, if every person desirous of obtaining, or renewing insurance were to deal directly with the office of the company, without any

intermediary, the cost of insurance would be materially reduced and rates would be proportionately lowered.

If the public were as wise as most of its members individually consider themselves to be, there would be no necessity for any efforts being made, personally, or by literature, to induce persons to insure their lives or their property. But the public, in this respect is not wise, but far otherwise, its lack of wisdom largely enhances the cost of insurance and its folly is further manifest by complaints against the natural consequences of their own actions.

It is mainly against fire insurance rates that objections are raised, yet, over these rates property owners have a large measure of control.

Municipal corporations obstinately refuse to establish such fire protection services as are essential in the interests of citizens. Owing to this persistence in maintaining a system of inadequate fire protection the losses inflicted on the insurance companies are excessive, consequently the rates for fire insurance have to be raised so as to bear some proportion to the extra risk. The insurance companies do not create the conditions which subject them to inordinate losses, they continually protest against those conditions, they are perpetually asking for improvements in fire protection, how unreasonable then it is to blame the insurance companies for high rates when their demands for such improved conditions as would enable them to reduce rates are ignored by civic authorities!

In this city the underwriters have been protesting for years against the inadequate fire protection provided by the City Council. They have repeatedly pointed out what improvements are required, more especially in the supply of water, but the civic authorities content themselves with maintaining the fire protection service at the same level of inadequacy year after year.

It is true they have enlarged the service, but the additions made have been only proportionate to the additions made to the population and properties of the city. The local standard of efficiency has not been raised, consequently the rates of fire insurance have not been generally reduced.

Going from the general to the particular, from city corporations to individuals, there is the same disregard of the natural, the unalterable connection between the nature and extent of fire risks and the rate of fire insurance. Buildings are erected of the cheap, fire-trap class, false economy induces property owners to neglect precautions against fire. Yet, when they apply for insurance they expect such low rates as can only be conceded on buildings that are high quality risks.

So also in regard to warehouses, their protection against fire is very inadequate, they have highly inflammable contents, the heating apparatus and al-