

In the interesting speech made by Mr. Alexander Laird, discussing these accounts, the fact was disclosed, apropos of recent comment on the subject of the bank's premises, that the figure at which the Canadian Bank of Commerce takes these into its balance sheet, viz., \$3,142,488 represents only 45 p.c. of the value of the properties. On the subject of the banks' circulation, Mr. Laird repeated a suggestion made in part a year ago, that the period during which the emergency currency may be issued by the banks should be extended to include the months of September and February. "In connection with this suggestion," said Mr. Laird, "it should be noted that because of the great development of business it is altogether likely that we shall in the near future experience a currency stringency in the spring and summer months. This matter should have very serious consideration, and immediate action should be taken to guard against the possibility of such an occurrence. The augmentation of capital by the banks is, of course, the first remedy to be applied, but this is of necessity a slow process and would scarcely keep pace with requirements." This matter of the provision of currency will doubtless occupy a great deal of the attention of the authorities, when they come to take up seriously the question of the revision of the Bank Act.

MR. LAIRD ELECTED A DIRECTOR.

Among the routine business transacted at Tuesday's meeting may be noticed several interesting developments. To the regret of his colleagues and after a period of service extending to twenty years, Mr. Robert Kilgour retired from the board, and to fill the vacancy thus created, Mr. Alexander Laird was elected a director. There will be hearty congratulations to the able general manager, from the whole banking fraternity upon this event, which forms a fitting compliment after the many years of service, which have been given by Mr. Laird to the bank. Authority was given to increase the number of directors from fourteen to not exceeding nineteen in the event of the amalgamation with the Eastern Townships Bank going through—this amalgamation, as Sir Edmund Walker put it, giving the united banks a "very nearly perfect system" of branches.

Authority was also given to the board to take the necessary steps to increase the authorised capital to \$25,000,000—a quite natural move in view of the fact that with the completion of the Eastern Townships deal the paid-up capital will equal the present amount authorised, and it was agreed also to obtain authority to change the denomination of the shares from \$50 to \$100.

Cordial recognition was made of the work of the officers and staff, of whom Mr. H. B. Walker occupies the important position of manager at the St. James Street, Montreal, branch.

FEDERAL CONTROL OF UNITED STATES INSURANCE COMPANIES.

Two important gatherings of United States insurance officers have recently adopted resolutions expressing the opinion that the insurance business should be recognised as essentially interstate in its character and that consequently insurance companies should be enabled by law to derive their charters and powers from the Federal Government instead of, as now, from the States, and, by implication, should be subjected only to the supervision of the National Government, instead of that of the legislatures, and insurance departments of the States. The two gatherings were those of the Association of Life Insurance Presidents and of the Workmen's Compensation Service and Information Bureau.

Mr. Arthur Richmond Marsh, writing in the New York Market World and Chronicle, points out that the tenor of these resolutions is in no respect novel. There can be no denying the fact, he says, that the particular cross which insurance men in the United States are now called upon to bear is the unceasing disturbance of their business and vexation of their souls due to the heterogeneous laws and administrative methods of the states with reference to insurance. But he does not think that the managers of American life insurance companies have embarked upon a very hopeful quest in setting out to obtain the federal incorporation and supervision of insurance. He says:—

There are at least two obstacles in their path which they will find it very difficult to remove or circumvent. The one of these is immediate and in a sense of a technical character; the other, more remote but much more fundamental. The first is the fact that, according to the law as laid down by the Supreme Court in the famous case of Paul vs. Virginia, insurance is not interstate commerce, and consequently under the Constitution there is absolutely no power in Congress to do anything with it either to organize it or to control it or to grant powers to those who would conduct it. On the contrary, as the matter stands to-day, the whole subject is expressly reserved to the States. It is, of course, conceivable that the Supreme Court of to-day might be brought to reverse the decision of its predecessors. . . . Yet. . . . no such case has yet been framed and brought before the Supreme Court for adjudication. It would seem as if the lawyers at any rate have very little confidence in their ability to convince the Court that the decision in the case of Paul vs. Virginia was wrong in principle.

And this brings us to that more remote but, as we think, more fundamental difficulty with which the managers of insurance will have to contend in accomplishing their cherished plan. This is that there are political considerations to be taken into account in all these matters, quite as much as considerations of business convenience. Notwithstanding all the confusion and lack of uniformity and constant working at cross-purposes which such a system necessarily involves, this country has committed itself and, we believe, remains still profoundly committed to the federated, rather than the centralized organization of society. It will not do to neglect for a moment the deep latent instinct of distrust which the citizens of the United States persistently retain towards any and every scheme which involves the removal from the authority of the States of the smallest portion of political or economic activity that can be retained there. . . . So we find not much reason to believe that it will be possible to arouse general enthusiasm for the project of nationalizing insurance and opening up to the most successful managers of it that larger and supposedly less obstructed field towards which they are turning their eyes so longingly.

A "Bank of Saskatchewan" is now being mooted. The Parliamentary notice is dated from Moose Jaw.