

system, he complained, was radically wrong. A. S. Bond, of the National Trust Company, gave details of a number of pieces of property in the city which were overburdened with taxes resulting in a deficit to the owners.

Individual citizens of Winnipeg were also present before the taxation commission. They all stated that properties were being overtaxed, while citizens not owning land got off free from most of the taxes.

W. A. Irish, a contractor, declared he would not build now in the city even if the property were given him free. "It is unfair," he argued before the commission, "that land owners should be compelled to pay for the educational system of the province while those not owning property are able to obtain the benefits free."

On behalf of clients, J. A. Machray, K.C., placed statistical tables before the board showing the various revenues and taxes derived from different properties throughout Winnipeg.

T. L. Hartley, of the Northern Canadian Mortgage Co., said that unless taxes went down rents would increase. Income taxation should be established by both the province and the Dominion, which would relieve the property taxation, he said.

### SIBERIAN TRADE NOT PRACTICABLE

Economic Conditions are at Present Too Disorganized to Permit of Profitable Business Being Carried On

THE Canadian Economic Commission, which has been investigating Siberian conditions reports that it is impossible to develop active trade with Siberia under present political and transportation conditions. The work of the commission in Siberia has been completed, but a final meeting will be held soon in Ottawa. The chairman, Col. J. S. Dennis, has already left for Canada, and the other members are also coming soon, with the exception of Mr. A. D. Braithwaite, who has gone to Omsk to study financial conditions. Commenting on the decision, the chairman says it is useless to continue the existence of the commission merely as a forwarding agency for orders of goods required by the Siberian Supply Co., which has been appointed sole agents for the Canadian and British governments. Anyway, the company itself is unable to purchase merchandise in Canada or Great Britain owing to the impossibility of shipping inland despite the fact that Siberia has a market of \$100,000,000 for Canadian and British goods. The unsettled financial condition of the country and the finances of co-operative concerns make it necessary that the Siberian Supply Co. furnish credit in the distribution of goods. The commission has exhaustive reports prepared on all phases of the trade question.

Writing recently to *The Monetary Times*, Mr. L. D. Wilgress, lately Canadian trade commissioner at Vladivostok, said:—

"The outstanding feature of the present trade situation in Siberia is the great shortage of all kinds of manufactured goods and the difficulties of railway transport into the interior. The insufficiency of rolling stock and the poor state of the roadbed are the most serious factors to be considered in connection with the economic restoration of Siberia. The shortage of goods may be said to have crippled the economic life of the country. The peasants are reluctant to bring in supplies to the towns, since in exchange they receive only paper money, with which they are unable to purchase the goods they so urgently require. The most practical way in which the allied countries can help Siberia is therefore in the restoration of adequate railway facilities and the shipment of merchandise for the relief of the present situation.

"Economic relief in Siberia presents a splendid opportunity for Canadian products to become established in this market. Canada can assist in two directions: (1) By giving Siberians the benefit of their practical experience acquired through dealing with similar problems in Canada; (2) by supplying the manufactured goods which suit the conditions in Siberia. Canada is the country which most resembles Sib-

eria in respect to natural conditions and resources. Siberia, therefore requires the assistance of Canadian engineers and technical men and the equipment, machinery and materials which are manufactured in Canada to meet conditions similar to those prevailing in this country. The appointment of the Canadian Economic Commission to Siberia has created a very good impression among commercial and professional circles, supplementing as it does our military effort. Enquiries are being received at this office from official bodies, co-operative and private undertakings regarding the ability of Canada to supply agricultural machinery and implements, seeds, railway and mining equipment, hardware articles and warm clothing, footwear, etc. Two of the chief obstacles which have to be overcome in connection with the shipment of goods to Siberia are ocean transport and finance. The former is a problem which is being solved from Canada. In regard to the latter a difficulty is experienced in adjusting the terms upon which Siberian importing organizations wish to purchase and those stipulated by the Canadian shipper. The importer as a rule desires to place a deposit of say from 25 to 30 per cent. with the order in a local bank, payment of the whole amount of the order being made on delivery of shipping documents at Vladivostok. The development of banking facilities to cater more to the wishes of reliable importing organizations is one of the chief questions to be considered in connection with Canadian economic relief in Siberia.

"In order to provide tonnage for return cargoes and to assist in stabilizing the exchanges, a market must be found for such products as Siberia can offer at the present time. Canada should be able to purchase such products as hides and skins, furs, bristles, wool, etc. By so doing they will be promoting trade relations between the two countries and widening the market for Canadian goods.

"Siberia is a country with a population of 10,500,000 and is practically dependent upon outside sources for manufactured goods. It should therefore be worth while for Canadians to make an effort to obtain their share of the trade with this market and to do so may require at least some relaxation in the conditions upon which exporters have hitherto found it possible to do business with this country."

### INSURANCE CLAIMS TO AWAIT INVESTIGATION

A recommendation was submitted to the Montreal Chamber of Commerce recently by the Commission of Municipal Affairs regarding the investigation of fires. The Chamber of Commerce decided to act upon this recommendation. The proposal reads as follows:—

"The Commission of Municipal Affairs, after study of the ameliorations that the Fire Commissioners of Montreal have suggested bringing into the functioning of that commission, has the honor of recommending to the Chambre de Commerce that it declares itself favorably upon the following modifications.

"1. That the fire insurance companies be allowed to establish the claim for a fire only after having taken into consideration the report of the Fire Commissioners' enquete upon the origin of the fire, provided that this enquete and report be made within a determined time.

"2. That the municipal administration be asked to have, according to need, one or several detectives present at the enquiries into the origin of fires. The detectives to be specialists, or at least to be particularly competent in this matter.

"3. That the municipal administration be asked to designate in each station a fireman, if first among the firemen to arrive upon the scene of a fire, who could take all statements and make inquiries in view of informing the Detective Department."

A return tabled in the Commons shows that at the present time 2,766 policies are in force under the provisions of the Civil Service Insurance Act, the amount of insurance provided being slightly in excess of seven million dollars.