THE ONTARIO PROBE.

The Canadian Fire Underwriters' Association, through Mr. J. A. Robertson, have presented an elaborate reply to the Ontario Insurance Commission regarding Mr. E. P. Heaton's allegations. The points of the C.F.U.A. reply may be summarised as follows:—

It is claimed by the Association: That its existence is necessary for the preservation of the well-being and solvency of the companies, in itself a vital matter for every member of the community; that by combining to make all inspection, both of waterworks and fire preventive appliances, as well as of individual risks, not only is the work better done, but an enormous saving in expense is secured as compared with what would be needed if each company had to do this for itself, and thus a direct saving in the cost of insurance is effected; that prompt recognition is given by reductions in rates to municipalities and individuals when improvements bettering the conditions are carried out; that in assisting and advising architects and property-owners as to the best methods of construction and protection, the C.F.U.A. is performing a valuable public service that no other machinery could do so well.

It is also contended that the Association's rules and regulations are made with the purpose of maintaining equality of consideration for risks of similar hazard and thus preventing any unfair discrimination; that without any stipulation as to insurance being placed with tariff companies, expert free service and advice are given to everyone desiring it, to aid in better construction and better protection, and thus to obtain the lowest possible insurance rates; that by its method of operation, and particularly by schedule rating, the Association has been and still is the only effective force in the direction of bringing about a betterment of conditions leading to a reduction in our tremendous fire loss; that in the application of its rules and rates it is quite independent of local or political influence, and it is absolutely impartial.

The enquiry before the Commissioner at the Parliament Buildings at Toronto has been continued this week, and has now adjourned until November 6th.

The Report of the Commissioner will no doubt be presented at the next session of the Legislature.

COMBINATIONS A BENEFIT TO THE PUBLIC.

In view of what transpired at this week's investigation, the following paragraph from an article which appeared in THE CHRONICLE's issue of September 29th has some bearing on the subject:—

"The simple fact is that in numerous cases, honest combinations,—and the law should take care of dishonest ones—are a positive benefit to the general public. Co-operation in conducting the operations of a number of railways or woollen mills or insurance offices may be quite as economical as co-operation among an association of individuals engaged in pursuit of a common object. A better service, cheaper good or more reliable insurance, coming as the result of combined experience and associated talent, is in the public interest and a positive good. Combinations in various lines have been known before now to do excellent service in the interest of the people by crowding out weak, unsafe concerns seeking public confidence and in exposing shams. The stronger any company is the better it can serve the public, and the combining of several individual companies, so as to work together on plans and by methods approved by the united wisdom and experience of all, is only a larger application of the same truth. The closer that varied experience and ability are associated in the general conduct of any line of important business or any profession, the better the results which are attainable. No objection is raised to the combination of doctors, lawyers, school teachers or electricians for mutual benefit and the better direction of their affairs. The same principle holds good in the conduct of important lines of business. The fact is the cry against combinations is largely kept up by politicians who have axes of their own to grind."

ROYAL'S NEW ACQUISITION.

London cables state that the Royal Insurance Company is absorbing the Legal Insurance Company, a London concern established in 1907, transacting all kinds of insurance except life and with an annual premium income of about a million dollars. The acquisition will doubtless bring useful new legal connections to the Royal, the mammoth character of whose business operations is well known.

The report of the Wisconsin insurance department on July 1 showed that its State fire insurance fund was insolvent to the amount of $11,231. Since then another loss of $25,000 has occurred, increasing the deficit to over $30,000. After thirteen years the State insurance fund has that much less than nothing with which to meet $43,000,000 of liability which it is now carrying.