

million bushels. Whatever the actual figures may be, a record crop is now practically assured, and the effect upon the general progress of the country cannot fail to be most satisfactory. On the Pacific coast, people are thinking more about the salmon run than the wheat crop, for after three seasons of comparative leanness, the "big year" is here once more. It is as yet a little too early to speak with any confidence, but latest reports indicate that there will be a bigger run than in 1901. The next week or two will decide the matter, and it is to be hoped that present indications will be borne out by results. A large salmon pack means a good deal to the Pacific Province. Unless all signs fail, 1905 will be recorded in history as a year of plenty, and the banks will certainly share in the increased prosperity which we may reasonably expect.

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#### HEALTH AND ACCIDENT INSURANCE.

No more important convention has taken place for a long time than that of the International Association of Accident Underwriters at the Royal Muskoka last week, and though ample opportunity was given for pleasure-seeking in that paradise of pleasure-seekers seldom have a body of professional men discussed more keenly the very foundations of their calling. This makes the decisions which they came to on many fundamental matters a subject of more than usual importance. Not that there was any great degree of unanimity prevailing; in many instances the opposite to this state of things was fully emphasized, but Mr. E. S. Lott, the president and chairman, had a genius for harmony—and for getting the delegates down to business. There can be little doubt that the association has been a powerful factor in giving an upward trend to the health and accident insurance business, and that at no time in its history were the men who carry it on of a broader mould, or its agents more able. The result is seen in the extraordinary increase in policies written in recent years.

As an illustration of the remarkable manner in which accident insurance is making a showing for itself and a position in modern life, we cannot refrain from mentioning the significant fact that, of the twenty-two persons who were killed in the wreck of the Twentieth Century Limited in Ohio last month, no fewer than sixteen held policies in companies that are members of the association. The death benefits amounted to \$278,000 in the aggregate, of which every dollar has already been paid to the beneficiaries. Companies have been notified in addition of nine non-fatal accidents to policy-holders arising from the same cause.

One of the points which brought particularly lively discussion was the proposition to limit weekly benefits under accident policies to fifty-two weeks and to discontinue the cumulative feature. It was held by one side that the two-hundred-week limit was too much for the money, tended to encourage fraud and did not help sell insurance. On the other side it was argued that it met a public need, will be not unduly expensive with proper restrictions, and that the companies should charge for it rather than drop it. Finally, to make a long matter short, an almost unanimous determination was arrived at to drop the long indemnity period of accident policies, but no agreement could be reached with regard to abandoning the accumulation feature.

It is evident to all interested in this important branch of the insurance business that while there is a practical uniformity in the insuring clauses and con-

ditions of contract for accident insurance, together with a substantial uniformity in the premiums charged, there is an almost bewildering variety of contracts referring to sickness, as well as in the amount and ratio of the premiums payable. It may be truly said that the subject of health insurance is to-day in its infancy and that none needs a more careful consideration and revision. Not only do the forms of contract need further study than has so far been given them, but the premiums charged must be placed on a more uniform and adequate basis. The summaries from which results as to health insurance are to be tabulated must be placed on a very much more extended foundation, a work which we understand a statistical committee of the association is now engaged upon. This is a work the importance of which cannot be overestimated, but it is one on which we feel sure the association's labors, as manifested by the delegates' keen interest at the convention, will soon make a mark.

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#### THE MUNICIPAL UNION.

The convention of the Union of Canadian Municipalities started in Winnipeg on Wednesday, with Mayor Urquhart, of Toronto, in the chair. The objects of this union are so admirable and come home with such force to almost every person living in a Canadian town or city that its deliberations are always listened to or read with more than the usual perfunctory interest. It is a gratifying tribute to the zeal on behalf of the public welfare of Canadians that the association is showing such vigorous signs of usefulness and life. Mr. Urquhart made a well-received suggestion for the improvement of the Union's organization, so as to render it more efficient in placing its views before both the Federal and Provincial Legislatures. The existence of provincial unions prepared to look over legislation in local assemblies and ready to act in unison through the Dominion Union would do much to simplify the problem of protection against encroachment.

Considerable discussion was aroused by a paper on municipal finance by Mr. Louis Betz. He urged that all bonded indebtedness should be limited to ten per cent. of the assessed valuation and should be permitted only for operating civic enterprises, acquiring real estate, constructing buildings, mains, sewers, and bridges.

Several papers were read by representatives of various municipalities giving their experiences, under one form or another, of municipal ownership, and so forth. Mr. F. Dagger, the telephone expert who has lately been conferring with the Dominion Government, read an exhaustive paper on the telephone question.

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#### THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR FIRES.

The pleasing consideration that the fire waste up to date on this continent has been very much less than it was last year should not be allowed to blind us to the fact that, making all possible deductions, it is enormously greater than it ought to be under any normally careful state of public understanding. Primarily this public apprehension or carefulness depends on the individual and there can be no doubt that at the root of the trouble lies the average man's disregard for the inner meaning of this waste of his own and the country's wealth. What he should bear in mind is that