

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE INSURANCE FEDERATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Workmen's Compensation Board—Second Annual Report

Chairman E. H. S. Winn is to be congratulated on his second effort to justify the Government's confiscation of a legitimate business formerly carried on by private organizations under difficulties which the Government was wise enough to remove before it tackled the job.

It would be interesting to know how much of the \$10,000 of the general tax-payers' money, so generously contributed by the Government to foster the Scheme, is expended in producing these Reports from year to year.

Mr. Winn is apparently convinced that the work of the Board, although the Act has only been in force for two years, is an unqualified success, and he is now, like Alexander or Mr. Hohenzolern of more recent times, looking for new worlds to conquer.

Health Insurance is to be the next thing, and we have no doubt, if all goes well, the Government will soon be conducting all the business of the Country and the plain people will be running round in brass buttons working for the Government.

Personally we should like the job of getting out annual reports, so that we might, like Jack Horner, let the people know "what a good boy am I," and advertise, free of cost, what a kind and sympathetic heart we have.

"In the closing months of the last year we have been compelled to reject a number of claims arising out of the influenza epidemic, in which mothers with small children made application for pensions. One case was particularly painful. When informed that we must reject her claim, the mother of eight small children asked us in desperation, 'What am I to do?' We were unable to answer. She withdrew from the Board room accompanied by two of her frightened children clinging to her skirts, and one in her arms, to answer the question as best she could."

Why not enlarge the scope of the Act and establish free soup kitchens, hospitals, dispensaries, food and clothing stores?

The same method of assessment might be applied over a wider area, and were the management of the whole business in Mr. Winn's able hands we feel sure he could get out a report showing that the thing was not only beneficial but run more cheaply and efficiently than would be possible by the intervention of "intermediaries," i.e. common people.

The Act is so well established now that Mr. Winn feels he can afford to admit that at one time there were grounds for objection to its introduction, amongst others being the question of cost.

This is now disproved by the fact that over a period of two years the ratio of cost to volume of assessment is only 4.83 per cent.

We presume the Employers are all satisfied, especially those who formerly carried their own risk and who are now compelled to contribute to the Fund so that the ratio of expense may be kept low, or seemingly low. Also those who formerly enjoyed a merit rating from the Companies and who will have to wait another year at least before the Board can figure out some system of its own.

Mr. Winn explains that this wonderfully low cost is only possible because of the existence of the Board for distribution of the Fund, whereas formerly there were "intermediaries," who were making a living by doing the same work.

Mr. Winn and his associates may be working for nothing, but we doubt it. This year's report is silent on this point, but we seem to remember that Mr. Winn applied for and got an increase over and above a very substantial salary at a time when the Government was preaching retrenchment on every possible occasion.

We do not quite see the difference between a "Board" composed of ordinary human being, and ordinary human

beings acting as what Mr. Winn is pleased to call "intermediaries."

Does it mean, perhaps, that when a man gets a job under the Government he shows greater efficiency. It has never struck us in this way, but we are open to conviction, and if we live long enough we may yet see the day.

We regret to note that some 403 applications for compensation have been turned down, owing to the limitations of the Act.

It must be very trying for the Board to turn down anything, especially as one of the principal reasons given for the adoption of the State Scheme was that the Companies sometimes did not pay claims.

Statistics are most interesting things, and much may be learned from a careful study of the Statistical Tables in this Report.

For instance, 3818 persons in the "Conjugal State" were single men and women. Such a large proportion of single men and women living in the conjugal state should not be permitted. Might we suggest that the Government establish a free matrimonial bureau in connection with the administration of the Act?

It might not serve any purpose at the present time to show the names and salaries of the Board members and staff who are now making a living "out of the misery and distress of workmen injured in industrial accidents" (See Page 7 of Report), but, on the other hand it might possibly bring home to those who are now making a living in other lines of business what would happen to them were the Government to extend this system of confiscation.

Given a monopoly in Insurance, Liquor or any other commodity, it is a very simple matter, even for a Government, to show a low expense ratio, but we venture to suggest that private enterprise would show greater efficiency and say less about it.

CONFEDERATION LIFE OFFICIALS ON VISIT

The veteran head of the Confederation Life Association at Toronto, Mr. John K. Macdonald, and his son, Mr. C. S. Macdonald, acting general manager, were visitors to the Province last week on the occasion of their annual inspection trip through Western Canada. While in Vancouver they made their headquarters at the offices of the company in the Bank of Nova Scotia Building, and were aided in their inspections by Mr. H. R. Glass, investment manager in charge of British Columbia investments; Mr. Howard Farrant, inspector of Provincial agencies, and Mr. John L. Kerr, who has been recently superannuated after a long and faithful service with the Association, and over twenty years in charge of the British Columbia affairs of the company.

Mr. J. K. Macdonald, the managing director, has passed his seventy-eighth milestone and is now looking forward to being relieved of active business affairs. He was an original shareholder of the Confederation Life and had much to do with its formation. Three years after its organization, he was placed in charge of the company's affairs, thus rounding out at this date practically a half century of work and association with this important life company.

Mr. C. S. Macdonald was very enthusiastic over the business that the Confederation Life had done during the year, as already the company has written more business in 1919 than any full year in its history. The reason for this, Mr. Macdonald ascribes to the influence of Spanish Influenza. At no time has the importance of insurance