

lish promoters, like many of their class in this country, to escape publicity, or, in other words, to evade the safeguards created by the Government in the interests of investors. In this connection we note that it is intimated in an introduction to Mr. Barnes's report that the attention of the committee has been specially directed to three questions which appeared to the board to be urgent and important. The first is that of prospectusless companies; the second, the registration outside England of companies carrying on business there and appealing to English investors; the third, the extension of the provisions of the Act of 1900 with regard to the registration of mortgages and charges to include all mortgages, and not merely those created since January 1, 1900. The terms of the reference are wide enough to prevent the exclusion of any subject which any member may desire to bring forward, and the idea of the Board of Trade is that the Department shall consider by what means joint-stock enterprise can best be fostered and encouraged, as well as the means by which illegitimate practices may be most effectively repressed.

We notice another thing in connection with the British Board of Trade which is far from being without interest to Canadians, who suffer from more or less similar laxity of the law. We refer to the appointment of a committee to enquire into the operations of companies (not life insurance companies) which collect periodical payments from the industrial classes in return for benefits promised in the future. These concerns, being registered under the Companies Acts, are free from the restrictions imposed on life assurance companies and on companies registered under the Industrial and Friendly Societies Acts, and the facts show it is time for some investigation into their workings. In certain cases companies with a fairly substantial nominal capital, but with very slender cash resources, are issuing "bonds" payable by instalments over a series of years, and promising at the termination of the period in question to return to the holder an abnormally large sum, in addition to the amount he has actually contributed, one of the conditions, however, being that if the payments are discontinued, the "bond" shall be forfeited. The operations of these concerns are carried on among a class of people who, while having no money to lose, are almost entirely ignorant of financial matters, and it is, therefore, desirable that the Government should take some measures to protect them.

MAYOR URQUHART'S IGNIS FATUUS.

It is a surprising thing that a man of the ability of Mr. Urquhart, holding as he does such an important office as the mayoralty of a great city, should be led into the making of strictures on a business he does not understand. Yet his recent complaints as to the high insurance rates on residences in Toronto signify this to be the case. In the first place, they are not high. That is to say, they are not greater than those prevailing in the generality of cities of Toronto's class, and, compared with a good many, they are materially lower.

But this is not all. The underwriters have actually promised to reduce the rates to an even lower level—by twenty per cent.—just so soon as the im-

provements in water service, which the citizens of Toronto have already expressed their desire to see inaugurated, shall have been completed. Why does not the city, why does not Mayor Urquhart see these improvements immediately carried through? It is over a year since they were decided on; yet what has been done so far? Herein lies a much easier way to the gaining of the mayor's desire for cheaper rates than by a mere scolding of the companies for charging the reasonable fees which alone allow them to live.

As to his suggestion for a municipal system of insurance, it is strange, indeed, that in the light of past experience of other cities that have tried it to their cost, a man of Mr. Urquhart's calibre should dream of allowing such a proposition to pass his lips, even *though* he does not pretend to any close knowledge of insurance. Let us take a suppositive case, and ask a practical question. If, for example, the fire insurance in force on Toronto dwelling houses reaches the sum of about \$50,000,000, the premiums payable at the present alleged enormous rates enforced by the companies would be in the neighborhood of \$100,000 per year. Now, there is not the slightest chance of his suggestion ever being carried out, but for curiosity sake we will carry forward our illustration, and ask, What sort of a reserve fund will there be at the command of the city even at these rates? And these are the rates which are so high! Mayor Urquhart probably does not realize that it is not only the big panoramic fires which eat into a company's profits, but the infinite number of small claims, which in the aggregate mean a large outlay.

It is not claimed that the dwelling-house class of risk has lost money for the companies. It is a fact, however, that, taking the last twenty years and all classes of risks into consideration, they have come out behind in their balance. It is hardly to be expected that the companies should still further reduce rates on what is practically the only class of risk on which they have not lost money.

THE STAPLE TEXTILES.

The firmness in the woolen trade continues; indeed, since the marketing of the new clip it may be said to have become even more accentuated. A sign which shows how the wind lies is in the fact that American manufacturers already this year have from various sources imported approximately 60 per cent. more wool than was the case at this date last year. One result of the high prices is the advance by Canadian manufacturers of blankets of 2½ cents per pound, and they claim there is a likelihood of a further rise of 5 cents. This in the face of a 50 or 60 per cent. rise in raw material is not to be wondered at.

Speaking of the large American importation of wool, it has drawn particular attention to itself in recent weeks in Bradford. To such an extent has that raw material of Bradford's chief industry been purchased by agents of manufacturers in the United States that the idea has been held by many that an attempt was in progress to "corner" the market. During the year it is stated that no less a quantity than 600,000 pounds has been shipped for American account from that one district. This is notwithstanding the extremely high prices and the fact that this year's English clip has been an unusually heavy