

The establishment of branch laboratories either in Canada or England is favored also by Mr. W. B. Meikle, general manager of the Western Assurance Company; Mr. E. P. Heaton, manager of the Insurance Department of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association; and Mr. J. E. E. Dickson, Canadian manager of the Law, Union and Rock Insurance Company, Limited. Mr. Alfred Wright, manager for Canada of the London and Lancashire Fire Insurance Company, sees no objection to branch laboratories, excepting on the ground of expense, provided the standards are kept sufficiently high to meet the exigencies of climatic and other conditions obtaining on the North American continent, the requirements for which must necessarily be more stringent than those of Great Britain."

The consensus of opinion, therefore, appears to be favorable to a branch establishment. Such a branch, we think, would tend to increase further the efficiency guaranteed by the parent laboratories. It should satisfy the manufacturers, who are complaining, and at the same time the good cause of fire prevention in Canada would be given further and hand-in-hand assistance by Canada, Great Britain and the United States.

MONTREAL'S TRANSPORTATION

The Tramways topic continues to be one of the most discussed in Montreal. It is proposed that various organizations bind themselves together in order to bring about the desired improvements in the service. Unfortunately, the bulk of the suggestions made are entirely impracticable. One is that through cars should be run at certain hours of the day between the down-town section and Westmount. There is but one line of double track between those points, connecting by means of the up-town district. It is difficult to see how the through car is to facilitate matters when other cars are stopping at every block. The company's general manager and others have suggested that the stops be made less frequent on this route. Apparently the city council does not favor that proposal. They urge that nothing but a subway will meet the situation with finality. One of the aldermen suggests that the subway be constructed by the city, and that the underground line be owned by the city and leased to the company for operation. He declares that the company will not make any move in this direction, although it owns the necessary charter to carry out the work. But is the time ripe for subways either in Montreal or Toronto?

Mr. Robert, president of the company, supports the idea that it is not the company's intention to undertake the construction of an underground system at present. He thinks a better surface system is wanted, and declares that the company will surprise the city with what it will be able to do if the city will only co-operate with it. He does not say in what respect co-operation is desired. There is a terrible amount of talk on both sides.

It seems evident that the only possible way to relieve the congestion is to build more lines. The cars frequently follow each other as closely as they well can, and they often are held up for considerable periods because those ahead cannot get out of the road fast enough. It is likely that the first measure of relief will be afforded by cutting out some of the stops, a suggestion which finds general favor, but is likely to meet with criticism after it is put into effect. The second measure will possibly be to run cars through for considerable distances on certain streets. But without more routes this relief will be of but a temporary character. There seems to be a strange reluctance to discuss the question of new routes both on the part of the company and the city. Meantime there are grievances, and the Public Utilities Commission looks like a fish out of water.

TORONTO'S FINANCING

There has been much criticism, some deserved and some undeserved, respecting the manner in which the city of Toronto has handled its finances. Opinion has become so sharply divided that the city authorities are almost inclined to label even fair-minded critics of their work as detractors of the credit of Toronto and of Canada generally. That is unnecessary, as every loyal citizen wishes to see Canada's municipalities stand high in the world's money markets. Whatever opinions may be held, there are also some outstanding facts.

Early last year, Toronto had for disposal several million dollars' worth of debentures. At that time the market was on the downward grade. What were then excellent offers were made to the city by Canadian houses for a part of the, or the entire issue, for sale. These offers were refused. The mayor and city treasurer then went to London to confirm what they had already been told in Toronto by well-posted financial men. They were advised not to make a public offering of their debentures, and they then placed £1,200,000 one-year notes at about 4½ per cent.

Now the city has placed in London an issue of £1,075,000 4 per cent. consolidated debentures at 92½. The public took only 15 per cent., leaving the remaining 85 per cent. with the underwriters. That in itself is not a serious fact, as the rest of the bonds will be placed from time to time. Toronto needs a lot more money, however, in the near future, and it will not help matters to have the underwriters busy so long in disposing of the former issue. Also, it cannot be overlooked that far better offers were made to the city early last year and refused. Four per cents. were placed before the British investor despite universal opinion that the day of the municipal 4 per cents. in London is over. It may be contended that Winnipeg later floated £750,000 4½ per cents. at par, and even then the public took only 25 per cent. of the issue. The reception to the Toronto loan did not help the Winnipeg loan, despite the difference in yields. Aside from that, the Toronto city authorities seem to have pursued an unfortunate course in their financing. Good offers for their bonds last year were declined; a useless pilgrimage to London was made; a temporary loan was forced upon the city; four per cents. were issued in a market which has no use for them; and nobody appears to be working in the interests of Toronto in the market. It is well known that all issues need proper market support, and we fail to see where Toronto is getting that support in London.

FARMERS AND THE BANKS

The farmers' claims have been prominently advanced during the present revision of the bank act, and it is pleasing to note that the Finance Minister, the members of the House, and the bankers themselves are desirous of further serving the agricultural interests through the medium of banking legislation. At this time, similar problems are confronting several of the United States. The Tri-State Grain Growers' Association recently appointed a committee to make an extensive inquiry on farm loans. The committee reported that it was well known to careful observers of agricultural conditions that "a revolution is going on in the methods and processes of farming; that, in fact, the business of farming is rapidly changing in its character from a mining to a manufacturing process. This change has necessitated an immense amount of new capital, for the purpose of furnishing better machinery, permanent buildings, fences, live stock, home improvements and good drainage; and with this demand for more capital has come a considerable interest in methods of securing it. In the area of well-developed farming, of dairy herds and beef cattle, of pork and poultry, of creameries and