

PROVINCIAL TAXATION OF INSURANCE COMPANIES.

On another page, THE CHRONICLE publishes a summary, brought up to date, of the provincial taxation imposed upon Dominion-licensed insurance companies. An official compilation in this connection has been supplemented by the results of THE CHRONICLE'S own enquiries, and while in certain respects the record is not quite complete, it is sufficiently so for practical purposes, and is ample enough to indicate the very onerous character of the taxation charges upon all classes of companies. In many instances, taxation is on a scale which is utterly unreasonable, and some of the taxes imposed, like that upon life insurance premiums, are downright stupid. THE CHRONICLE is inclined to believe that a considerable deal of good can be done in this important matter, especially in those provinces where taxation is particularly exorbitant, through the use of slips or "stickers" attached to premium reminders and receipts, informing the policyholder of the percentage of his premium which goes in taxation. Individual companies have, we believe, tried this plan, but unfortunately have not kept it going for more than a limited time, and organisations of some branches of underwriting are now discussing its adoption. The plan would cost very little, and persevered in, should arouse the interest of the policyholder and evoke in him a willingness to co-operate with the efforts of the companies to reduce these taxes, which ultimately come out of the policyholders' pockets. Unless the co-operation of policyholders is secured, we do not see how any permanent rectification of present injustice in regard to the scale of taxation is likely to be obtained.

LESSONS OF THE QUAKER OATS FIRE.

Mr. A. J. Mylrea, a C. F. U. A. inspector, makes the following observations regarding the Quaker Oats fire at Peterborough:

Once again the importance of isolating hazardous processes is emphasized and it is suggested in order to secure a minimum damage from any possible explosion, a means for the explosion to vent itself be provided either by making the exterior walls of light curtain wall construction or providing large plain glass areas. It would seem advisable also to locate control valves at a safe distance from the buildings where such hazardous processes are carried on.

If in any way it can be ascertained that the coke gases in the dry kiln room contributed to the intensity of the explosion, such methods of grain drying should be abandoned and some safer method such as steam drying be adopted.

The complete failure of the concrete building shows the necessity of providing automatic sprinkler protection wherever the contents of a building are combustible, irrespective of the construction of the building; and the folly of constructing an otherwise fire-resistive building and then leaving large unprotected openings, such as the bag hoist openings in the concrete warehouse, is demonstrated.

The value of being prepared to utilize the equipment of a neighboring fire department even though the hose couplings had different threads is demonstrated by the way in which Peterboro was enabled to use the services of the Lindsay fire brigade.

A HALF-YEAR'S FIRE LOSS.

The losses by fire in the United States and Canada during the month of June, as compiled from the records of the New York Journal of Commerce, reached an aggregate of \$15,513,270, as compared with \$12,247,500 in 1916 and \$10,893,950 in 1915. The losses for the first half of 1917 reach the unusually heavy total of \$144,621,725, as compared with \$125,776,420 last year and \$92,391,000 the year before. The following table gives a comparison of the losses by months for the first half of this year with those of 1916 together with the losses for the balance of 1916.

	1916.	1917.
January.....	\$21,423,350	\$36,431,776
February.....	24,770,770	29,587,660
March.....	38,680,250	17,523,000
April.....	12,681,050	18,597,225
May.....	15,973,500	24,968,800
June.....	12,247,500	15,513,270
Total, 6 months.....	\$125,776,420	\$144,621,725
July.....	23,613,800	
August.....	10,745,000	
September.....	12,244,625	
October.....	17,701,375	
November.....	19,898,450	
December.....	22,063,325	
Total for year.....	\$231,442,995	

There were some 230 fires during the month of June this year, each of which caused an estimated property damage of \$10,000 or over. This compares with 261 such fires in May, 244 in April, 270 in March, 381 in February and 303 in January, making a total of 1,689 fires of \$10,000 or over in the first half of 1917.

It will be seen, remarks the Journal of Commerce, that the first half of 1917 shows a loss of about \$19,000,000 more than the same period of 1916 and \$52,000,000 more than the same period of 1915. This has been a severe strain on the fire insurance companies. Fire underwriters are giving close attention to the hazard of shingle roofs, particularly in Southern cities, where numerous sweeping fires have occurred because of the shingles.

EMBEZZLEMENT RECORD.

Press notices and dispatches, as collated by the Bonding Department of the Fidelity & Casualty Company of New York, indicate, for the months of April and May, 1917, the following defalcations.

	April, 1917.	May, 1917.
Banks and Trust Companies.....	\$174,400	\$238,400
Beneficial Associations.....	850	200
Public Service.....	3,100	36,550
General Business.....	60,157	90,466
Insurance Companies.....	43,500	546,500
Transportation Companies.....		2,671
Courts and Trusts.....		
Miscellaneous.....	167,444	231,000
Total.....	\$449,451	\$1,145,787

NORTHERN ASSURANCE COMPANY

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Last year's net fire premiums received in Canada totalled \$762,029, net losses incurred being \$584,822. A few months ago, the Northern began the transaction of marine insurance in Canada. Both the Northern and its Canadian management have always enjoyed the thorough confidence of the Canadian insuring public, and are most worthy of the continuance of that confidence.