

material change one way or the other has transpired. But, of course, the high wheat prices have a tendency in some ways to absorb bank funds; as they mean larger loans against a given quantity of the grain. This effect would, however, be largely offset if holders of wheat in Canada have been generally following the policy of selling out and taking profits on stocks of grain held from last fall or bought at lower prices. If sales of this kind for export to the States or Europe have been numerous and heavy, and there is reason to believe they were, quite a considerable reduction might be effected in certain big lines of credit against stored grain.

UN-LEGISLATING LIFE INSURANCE RESTRICTIONS.

There is a breathing-spell at Ottawa in the matter of insurance legislation—so far at least as public discussion is concerned. The Insurance Bill has been handed over for the nonce to a sub-committee of the Commons Committee on Banking and Commerce, there to be deliberated upon in the light of representations made before the parent committee by the various interests most concerned. That careful consideration will be given to every mooted point may be taken for granted, judging by the personnel of the sub-committee. But it is still incumbent upon life insurance interests to make clear to the "legislative mind," in every reasonable way, the un wisdom of retaining any unduly restrictive features of the bill. Over-restriction will tend not so much to prevention of possible evils as to encouragement of evasion—and thus to greater abuse. With adequate publicity provided for, details of managerial methods and expenditures may well be largely left to the working-out of those directly responsible for the conducting of the companies' business.

The New York Insurance Department's preliminary report for 1908, just now to hand, shows a year's decrease of \$145,000,000 in insurance in force upon the books of the life companies of that State—in contrast with an apparent increase of over \$238,000,000 in the business of other-state companies reporting to Albany. This is practical evidence of how a great business may be hampered by over-zealous state paternalism. Nor is the loss in such a case confined to insurance companies as such. General business interests of the state suffered, to which the New York Chamber of Commerce bore pertinent witness when asking Governor Hughes to recommend amendment of the Armstrong Laws. This it will be remembered the governor declined to do—as might have been expected after his vetoing of the measure which passed the legislature last year.

But, this week, there has been advanced to the order of final passage in the Senate at Albany another measure amending the life provisions of the New York insurance law—and it is stated that the bill meets the objections of Governor Hughes to last year's measure. While it is, therefore, scarcely likely to be altogether acceptable to the life companies, they and their agents welcome any improvement upon present conditions. An important amendment consists in the modification of Section 101, which now compels domestic companies to use set policy forms; but which, if the amendment passes, will permit them to use after 1909 policy forms of their own selection providing they contain what are known as standard provisions. This amendment removes the discrimination of the statute against domestic companies and gives to them the freedom in the matter of their policy forms that has heretofore been given to foreign companies. The provision that all policy forms shall be subject to the approval of the insurance department before they can be used by any company is retained.

Another section to be amended is Section 97 which has become widely known and extensively criticised, particularly by the agents, because it imposes a limitation upon the amounts which companies can spend for agents' commissions and other expenses. The amendments proposed do not however increase the fund which may be expended for first year's commissions on new business. The modification consists in permitting renewal commissions to be paid for a greater number of years. There is the further provision that collection fees on every policy contract after its 15th year may be increased from 2 to 3 p.c. It is considered among insurance men that the proposed amendments to Section 97 are intended to be concessions to the experienced and efficient agent and that they will not be deemed of importance to the companies from any other standpoint.

Other amendments deal mainly with actuarial questions and are technical in their character. They are said to correct what are claimed by the companies to be minor defects in the statute. The bill also contains a provision of some importance to the companies and to the state from the financial standpoint. This is the one which will require that hereafter all expenses of examination which heretofore have been charged to the companies examined will be at the expense of the state. This change is in accordance with recommendations made by the Governor in his last message and also by the Superintendent of Insurance in his annual report.

To Canadians, this un-legislating of hastily-passed restrictive laws is of interest, not so much on account of the specific changes to be made, as for its indication that the law-makers of New York