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THE ROOF TANK SYSTEM.

FOREWARNED is forearmed! Is it? Four years ago the City Council was warned most definitely of the probability of just such a disaster as occurred on Victoria Square on Monday. In a letter to the Mayor and Board of Control, Mr. J. H. Lauer, the secretary of the Builders' Exchange, says:

I am directed by my Board of Directors to convey to you their congratulations for your prompt action as reported yesterday in taking immediate steps to have a prompt, efficient and independent inspection and investigation of the innumerable "sprinkler" roof tanks now existing in this City.

I am also directed to enclose a copy of a resolution adopted by my board on the 4th April, 1906, and forwarded to your then constituted Fire Committee on the occasion of the first of these roof catastrophes. A similar communication was forwarded to the press in August, 1908, on the occasion of the second collapse in the Wolf building, 170 McGill street (which happily occurred at 7.30 a.m., too early to cause loss of life), drawing attention to the fact that the City Council had seen fit to ignore our former resolution, and stating with sure prophetic instinct that these would not prove the last calamities, but that accident would result sooner or later in terrible loss of life and limb.

Had the recommendations of this Board been then adopted, the terribly sad affair of yesterday's calamity would never have happened.

The resolution then passed pointed out that within ten days two disasters had occurred through roof tanks, one with fatal results; that ordinary buildings in Montreal were inadequate to carry an extra load of fifty tons, besides the lateral strain of wind pressure and that within a few years over a hundred of these tanks had been constructed, through the recommendation of the Fire Underwriters' Association. The resolution concluded:

"Whereas, under present conditions there is every probability of a recurrence of similar casualties in

the near future; and whereas, it is highly desirable, in the public interest, to prevent a repetition of such disasters, which constitute a menace to property as well as to life and limbs;

"Be it resolved, that if we must have these elevated ornaments, an urgent appeal be made to the Fire and Light Committee of the City Council to institute forthwith a proper system of permits before allowing the erection of such tanks, after due inspection of the individual buildings in each case (as at present all responsibility appears to be disclaimed by existing departments of civic and provincial inspection), and a subsequent periodical inspection, as in the case of boiler inspection, and that pending the appointment of a special staff for this purpose, arrangements should be made to inspect without delay the large number of these tanks already in existence."

The action that is now being taken should have been taken in 1906. Meanwhile the tanks have been multiplying so rapidly that they are a blot on the landscape, and a constant menace to life and property. If we must have these things common sense suggests that they should have independent support from the ground up and even then fifty tons of water poised over a building will always possess elements of danger for the building.

WHILE it is to be hoped that the city's extensive programme of street improvements will be vigorously carried out, it is also to be hoped that the Road Department will not have too many of the roads blocked at the same time. A little consideration for the convenience of the public in this connection will be much appreciated. With such a big programme unless care is exercised, some of our people will wake up some fine morning to find themselves completely isolated from friends and tradesmen and business. It will not be splendid isolation either.

