

# THE INSURANCE CHRONICLE

## LIFE COMPANIES AND THEIR WORK.

"We of to-day have become so accustomed to life assurance, and are so familiar with occasional announcements of the great sums paid to beneficiaries, that we do not often stop to consider how vast must be the aggregate made by the policies issued by the many life companies. Time and again, the Insurance Press, which is so successful in exploiting underwriting matters in striking and graphic ways, has shown us by object lessons on a great scale what is paid in a single year by insurance organizations in the United States and Canada.

The life insurance companies operating in the United States and Canada in 1909 paid in claims in these two countries the immense sum of \$366,500,000—a million dollars a day. In addition, they paid out in dividends on policies, for surrender values and to annuitants and foreign policy-holders, a further sum of \$166,000,000, making the total disbursements \$532,500,000.

This is a considerable increase over life payments in other recent years. But it was to be expected, because the years 1907 and 1908 witnessed a large amount of insurance dropped, especially in the United States, by reason of the untoward conditions of business, and because 1909 witnessed a good aggregate of new insurance.

It is interesting to remark that where resort was had to borrowing on life policies to the extent of \$72,000,000 in 1907 and \$65,000,000 in 1908, the amount so borrowed in 1909 was only \$35,000,000. A good proof, this, that the circumstances of a great many business men are better.

The distribution of all the millions referred to is interesting. The largest share, as was to be expected, went to the State of New York, namely, 67 millions, half of it in New York city. Then came Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, with 39 and 25 millions respectively. Next, Illinois, with nearly 22 millions, followed by Canada with 19 millions. Next to Canada is Ohio, with \$18,800,000, and then in order New Jersey, Missouri, California, Michigan, the last receiving \$9,400,000.

Coming to consider cities, the share of this stream poured upon New York is overshadowing, namely, \$35,487,000. Philadelphia, which occupies second place in the list, got only \$13,385,000, then Chicago with \$11,223,000, Boston \$7,021,000—St. Louis, Pittsburg, Cincinnati, Baltimore in order. Naming our nearest neighbors across the line, Detroit receives \$1,850,000; Rochester, \$2,018,000; Buffalo, \$2,077,000; Cleveland, \$2,246,000.

It is to be remarked that in addition to the \$1,896,000 credited to Montreal in this list of beneficiaries, its adjoining town, Westmount, receives \$153,000. The aggregate looms large alongside of the \$902,000 of Toronto. One would expect the wealthy city of Halifax to rank higher than ninth in the list: it is credited with only \$164,000, while Winnipeg has \$196,000; Ottawa, \$270,000; St. John, \$362,000; Quebec city, \$441,000. In amounts of individual policies, Guelph, St. John, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, stand forward prominently.

The fire insurance companies of Montreal, Que., are having a controversy with the city over the maintenance of the Fire Commission. On legal advice the insurance companies have refused to pay the corporation's accounts. The Fire Commission is maintained by the city, which collects from the different companies doing business in the city two-thirds of the cost of its maintenance by assessing each of the companies in proportion to its revenue. It is pointed out that in the list of companies interested in a recent fire there are a number which pay no tax to the city, although they do business here.

## MONTREAL HERALD DISASTER.

### Coroner's Enquiry — Expert Evidence was Given — Building not Examined.

Two theories as to the cause of the Montreal Herald disaster were advanced at the coroner's enquiry, which was held in Montreal this week and ultimately adjourned.

Plans were produced by the builder of the water tank which collapsed, but no one took the responsibility for the preparation of them. Instructions as to the placing of the tank, it was thought, came from the architect. It was reported that two pillars had been removed from one of the upper storeys of the building within the past few weeks, but one of the employees in the building who was questioned on this point said that he knew nothing of it. It was admitted by one of the workmen of the Herald that a piece of machinery had fallen from one of the upper storeys to the ground floor when it was being removed.

### Builders Exchange Condemn Tanks

Mr. John Laner, secretary of the Builders' Exchange, gave evidence as to a resolution passed by the members of the exchange condemning tanks which were built on the roofs or walls of buildings. Mr. R. W. McAuley, representing Messrs. McGuire and Company, contractors for the erection of the tank, stated that he knew nothing of the taking of a permit for the building. The walls of the Herald building were not examined by him to see if they were sufficiently strong for the support of the tank. He had heard of no danger and he understood that the architect would have been able to tell him of any. He knew of a number of other tanks which had been erected by them on walls without other support. The tank in question was erected by another firm, McGuire & Company doing the sprinkler work only.

### Expert Evidence Given

Mr. Thomas Bellair, who had worked with the Ontario Wind Engine and Pump Company at the time of the construction of the tank, and had been in charge of the operations, stated that he had only made estimates. He knew that the walls of the building were not new, but he had no idea of their age. It was not part of his business to see if they were strong enough to support the tank. He acted under the guidance of the plans in the placing of the tank. The spans set up for the erecting of the tank were the largest that they had erected. The piers on which the supports rested lay on the top of the wall on the western side, but on the eastern they went through the walls. He had examined the position of the tank since the accident, but he did not see enough to be able to say anything definite about it. The supports were bent, but that might have been caused by the fall and the position in which they now found themselves. He never heard anyone say that there was any danger in the erection of the tank and he did not think that there was any.

### Building Was Not Examined

The building had not been examined for the purpose of the erection at the time by the city inspectors, and he knew nothing of any permit being asked for or granted.

Evidence was also given by employees of the Herald at the time of the disaster, and the enquiry adjourned until July 5.

Mr. Charlemagne Rodier, advocate, is watching the inquest on behalf of the friends of about 25 of the victims, to see upon whom the responsibility will be placed, and to enter actions for damages, which will aggregate over \$250,000.

An enquiry was also held to determine the cause of the fire which followed the collapse of the building.

### Evidence as to Fire Outbreak

As to the actual cause of the outbreak, the evidence was principally to the effect that the molten metal which came pouring down from the stereotyping and linotype machine departments might have started the fire. Gas escaping from the broken pipes, Chief Tremblay said, might have been ignited by the overheated atmosphere.

Mr. Brierley stated that the total insurance on the building and contents was \$177,000, plus \$16,000 special insurance against damage from leakages from the sprinkler system.

The commissioner in adjourning the inquiry indefinitely, said that it would be continued if any further evidence was available.