

According to the latest official list issued by the Dominion Insurance Department (dated 4th October, 1919) the number of companies now operating in Canada under Dominion fire licenses is 128.

Of the 28 companies operating at the end of 1918 and classified above as "Canadian companies," 11 are owned and operated by British companies. Besides the companies which operate under Dominion licenses, there is a large number which do business in a single province only under licenses issued by that province.

Fire Insurance Rates Steadily Decreasing

In these days when one hears so much about the decrease in the purchasing power of the dollar and the increase in the cost of almost everything purchasable, it is pertinent and enlightening to point out that in Canada to-day the dollar actually buys more fire insurance protection than it did in pre-war days. This is evidenced by the following table, which shows the rates paid in the Dominion during the last five years for each \$100 of amount insured:—

1914.	1915.	1916.	1917.	1918.
\$1.17	\$1.16	\$1.09	\$1.07	\$1.06

It is of even greater interest to glance at similar tables for the ten years preceding 1914, viz.:—

1904.	1905.	1906.	1907.	1908.
\$1.60	\$1.60	\$1.53	\$1.50	\$1.50
1909.	1910.	1911.	1912.	1913.
\$1.41	\$1.36	\$1.35	\$1.29	\$1.21

While the chief causes contributing to these remarkable reductions in rates have been the improvements that have taken place in building construction, fire brigades, water-pressure, etc., and the increases that have been made in the number of sprinkler equipments, etc., it cannot be gainsaid that the present rates are inadequate to provide for the ever-growing expenditures for salaries, clerical and other services, supplies, inspections and (heaviest advance of all) the increasing taxes imposed by federal, provincial and municipal governments—and in addition to permit the companies to set aside the reserves which they should be enabled to do to provide for heavy conflagrations. In this connection it may be pointed out that the companies in making up their rates are never able to make any adequate provision for conflagrations. In spite of the comfortable feeling on the part of the citizens of every community that a conflagration will never occur in *their* midst, the dread of such a disaster is ever present in the mind of the prudent underwriter and must be taken into consideration by him when he gives away a portion of his premium to his reinsuring companies for the purpose of covering the excess of his own net lines.

The Strike in Winnipeg

The great strike in Winnipeg which lasted from May 1st to June 25th caused serious concern and great uneasiness to the fire insurance companies. This strike was participated in by street car men, civic and postal employees, railway men, telegraphers, as well as the building and metal and other trades. It is particularly regrettable to have to record that the firemen and policemen also joined in it. For six weeks the citizens of Winnipeg lived in what was nothing more nor less than a reign of terror, as the methods adopted by the strike leaders were most despotic and tyrannical, they undertaking amongst other things to regulate and control the distribution of bread, milk, meat and ice, etc. In fact, the peril run by the city was even greater than that experienced by Seattle, Buenos Ayres and other cities in this hemisphere in which serious strikes have taken place recently. The trial just concluded in Winnipeg showed that the moderate classes of strikers were led away by the more dangerous ones—the exponents of Bolshevical and anarchical doctrines. After a month and a half of the gravest inconvenience and hardships the strike was defeated. It is not going too far to say that the rest of Canada is under a heavy debt of gratitude to the good citizens of Winnipeg for the victory won by them, as had it not been for their vigorous fight, the result might have been calamitous throughout the entire Dominion. Several serious fires occurred during the strike, but excellent

work on the part of the volunteer fire brigade, which was composed of inexperienced volunteers recruited from the general body of citizens, prevented any very heavy loss, although one fire threatened, and nearly effected, the destruction of the immense warehouses of the Hudson's Bay Company. No praise can be too high in speaking of the remarkably efficient work these volunteer firemen performed under the most adverse conditions. It is not too much to say that it compared most favourably with that of any professional firemen.

Riots and Strikes Insurance

The Winnipeg strike gave a tremendous impetus in that city as well as at other points in Canada, to the business of insurance against riots, strikes and civil commotions. Only a few of the companies were empowered by their licenses to transact this class of insurance. Others quickly followed their lead and obtained the necessary powers. The net premiums received by the companies after deducting the large amounts returned by them to the assured upon the cancellation of the policies after the expiration of ninety days (when they were cancellable) would not have covered more than a small proportion of the loss that would have had to be paid in Winnipeg, had only one or two of the buildings whose owners were persons *non grata* to the strike-leaders been destroyed by dynamite. It is no wonder, therefore, that many underwriters and others regarded the business of explosion insurance as written in Winnipeg as being more or less of a wild gamble. Even London Lloyds, the initiators of this class of indemnity, would have none of it at the prices and upon the conditions offered by stock companies on this continent.

Legislation

In Ontario an important change was made in the Insurance Act of that province by amending it so as to provide that in the case of the cancellation of a policy the tender shall be made by money, post office order, postal note or certified cheque payable at par. Previously the act provided that the tender must be in money only. The change now makes this provision of the act fair and workable.

No federal fire insurance laws were passed at the recent session of the Dominion parliament.

Canadian Fire Underwriters' Association

The report of the commissioner (the Honourable Mr. Justice Masten) appointed by the Ontario government to inquire into and report upon the rates, practices and methods of fire insurance companies and of the Canadian Fire Underwriters' Association, and also upon the existing laws of Ontario in relation to same, was laid before the house during the year. Amongst other things he recommends:—

- (a) Supervision of the underwriters' association to a limited extent by the province.
- (b) Prohibition of discriminatory rates.
- (c) Power to superintendent of insurance to mediate regarding disputes.
- (d) Companies to report annually the results of the various classes of risk.
- (e) Stricter rules regarding issuance of agents' licenses with power to superintendent to cancel any license, and agent's fees to be graded from \$5 to \$100 each.
- (f) Limitation of agents' commissions.
- (g) A revision of present Insurance Act ((Ontario).

He also reported upon but made no recommendation regarding:—

- (1) Tax on unlicensed companies.
- (2) Reciprocal or inter-insurance without deposit.
- (3) An act respecting individual liability for fire.

He advised against the adoption of the following suggestions:—

- (1) Uniform policies throughout all the provinces.
- (2) Prohibition of insurance of property in Ontario through agents resident outside of Ontario.

It will be remembered that the commission was appointed as a result of a complaint that the Canadian Fire Underwriters' Association was "arbitrary, autocratic and unfair" in its methods. It is therefore interesting to know that the