

# The Monetary Times

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## The Monetary Times OF CANADA

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FRED. W. FIELD, MANAGING EDITOR  
JAMES J. SALMOND, MANAGING DIRECTOR  
A. E. JENNINGS, P. G. CHERRY, B.A. Sc.,  
ADVERTISING MANAGER CIRCULATION MANAGER

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## PROPOSED BRANCH LABORATORIES

For some time, dissatisfaction has been heard in certain quarters respecting the effect of the operation of the Underwriters' Laboratories at Chicago upon the sales of manufactures which have to be approved by the Laboratories. These complaints have been brought to a head by Mr. C. Hamilton Wickes, the British Trade Commissioner in Canada, who has filed with the Imperial Board of Trade an exhaustive report tracing the formation and scope of operation of the Laboratories.

The Laboratories are situated at Chicago, but, as Mr. Robertson, secretary of the Western branch of the Canadian Fire Underwriters' Association, has pointed out in *The Monetary Times*, the insurance companies are thoroughly satisfied as to their independence and reliability. He thinks, also, that their location is very suitable, Chicago probably being as central as any point for the principal manufacturing industries of North America. In a letter to *The Monetary Times* he adds: "The insurance companies have always felt and known that it was better to have one good institution, qualified and equipped in the highest degree, rather than more numerous testing and examining stations where the equipment and staff could not hope to be so complete or capable, and which would not, therefore, have the full confidence of the manufacturers."

On the other hand, Mr. Wickes says there are real grievances from the manufacturers' viewpoint, and he suggests the following alternative remedies:—

1. A laboratory in Canada on the lines of the Underwriters' Laboratories, Chicago.

## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE

Editorial:	PAGE
Proposed Branch Laboratories .....	369
Montreal Transportation .....	370
Toronto's Financing .....	370
Farmers and the Banks .....	370
Handwriting on the Wall .....	371
City Money for Loans .....	371
An Early Blue Book .....	371

### Finance and Economics:

Practices of World's Banks, III. ....	372
Bank Audit or Government Inspection? .....	374
Telegraph Companies in Canada .....	378
Liens and the Bank Act .....	386

### Stock Exchanges:

Prices of the Week .....	408-9
Canadian Securities in London .....	410

### Bonds and Municipal Credit:

Our Municipals in London .....	380
Manitoba's Large Surplus .....	385
Finances of St. John .....	390

### Commerce and Transportation:

Governments and Railroads .....	375
Commercial Halifax is Busy .....	378
Railway Financing Last Year .....	383
Canada's Dairy Industry .....	386

### Insurance:

Perils of Assessment Insurance .....	379
Revision of Fire Insurance Policies .....	388
Why Michigan Barred Big Companies .....	389

### Mining:

British Columbia's Mineral Production .....	382
Seventeen Thousand Tons of Nickel .....	387

2. A purely British laboratory.

3. A laboratory in England, to be practically an offshoot of the Underwriters' Laboratories, Chicago—run on similar lines, utilizing the experience gained at Chicago, employing equally competent but British consulting and technical engineers. "The article," approved by label or tab, to be accepted by both the British and Chicago Laboratories. The same system of careful experiment and tests to be followed by careful consideration of reports before they are issued, and the adoption of the same or a similar system of "labelling and tabs," accompanied by some similar system of inspection.

"I am of the opinion," he adds, "that the last, No. 3, would be to the advantage of the British manufacturer (No. 1 is open to many of the objections raised against the Chicago Laboratories); it would throw open to our British manufacturers not only the Canadian but the United States market, as the labels or tabs would carry equal consideration by inspectors throughout North America."

*The Monetary Times* has canvassed the situation among those who operate the laboratories and among the fire insurance companies which support them. The most important declaration, which has already been printed in our columns, is that of Mr. W. H. Merrill, the manager of the Laboratories at Chicago. He says: "We are in accord with the views favored by Mr. Wickes in his third recommendation, that is, the establishment of a Laboratory in England." Mr. Merrill thinks that the place to inspect and label fire protection and fire prevention wares is at the factory where they are made—a reasonable contention.