

CONSTRUCTION AND THE FIRE LOSS.

That the character of building construction is one of the main factors of the heavy per capita fire loss on this continent in comparison with the fire loss of Europe is well known. In Canada some headway is gradually being made in the improvement of construction, as is shown by the fact that the average rate of premium charged by the Dominion-licensed fire companies last year per cent. of risks taken was 1.09 compared with 1.35 per cent. so recently as 1911, a reduction of 0.26 per cent. in five years. All of this reduction is not a result, of course, of improvements in construction; protective developments have a good deal to do with it and there are other minor causes. But in any case this improvement in construction merely touches the fringe of the construction problem, since it is stated by the Commission of Conservation that of approximately 2,000,000 buildings in Canada, less than one-tenth of one per cent. have been built with proper consideration of safety from fire. In the cities and towns from which statistics are available, almost 70 per cent. of the construction is frame. The vast majority of brick buildings are structurally defective and inadequately protected, and only one in every 1,200 is even nominally fire-proof.

With such conditions, it is obviously not sufficient to see that new buildings are of proper construction; the correction of the worst faults in existing buildings so that they may less easily fall a prey to the flames is essential. In many cases, no doubt, defective building codes are responsible for the present condition of affairs, but in others probably, lax administration of a perfectly good building code is the crucial fault. Fire insurance agents who find their local public or public authorities inclined to grumble at rates should point out that the matter is entirely in the hands of the public and public authorities. If hazardous construction is lessened, the rates will decrease, as they have decreased in the past.

CO-OPERATIVE ADVERTISING BY FIRE UNDERWRITERS.

The Chicago Board of Underwriters is carrying out an extensive advertising campaign, at a cost of about \$18,000, the general purpose of which is to call the attention of property owners to the notable increase in values of buildings and stocks, resulting from war conditions, and the importance of covering these enlarged values with insurance.

It also serves to get the business of fire insurance in general, and the work of the Chicago Board of Underwriters in particular, before the public in an impressive and helpful way, by pointing out the important services freely rendered the property owners by the Board, and its efficient assistance in reducing the fire waste, and thus lowering the cost of insurance.

The campaign covers eight weeks, both the English papers and the foreign language papers being used. The fact is emphasised that the benefits to be derived from this campaign depend upon the energy with which the widespread publicity and the interest aroused by it, are followed up by agents, brokers and solicitors.

Canadian bank clearings for the month of September were \$918,341,747, against \$812,329,204 for the corresponding month a year ago, and the highest figure ever reported for any September.

WHAT IS A VACANT BUILDING?

A judgment of interest to fire underwriters was recently given by the Supreme Court of Alberta in the case of Moran vs. North Empire Fire Insurance Company. It appears from a report of the case in Canadian Finance, that the policy in question contained the following provision:—"This policy will not cover vacant or unoccupied buildings (unless insured as such) and if the premises insured shall become vacant or remain unoccupied for more than ten days this policy shall cease and be void unless the company shall by endorsement on the policy allow the insurance to be continued."

The insured building was damaged by fire in August and the adjuster told the insured that he did not like to leave the building alone. The assured said that he was living in a small shack at the back of the damaged building, but that he would sleep in one of the rooms of the house, and the adjuster assented to this, saying that the two buildings were so close together that they would be practically occupied. The assured continued to sleep in the house until October, when a bad storm came on and the house leaked so badly and was so cold that the assured left it and slept in the shack without notifying the insurance company. Then in November the building was totally destroyed by fire and the company refused to pay on the ground that the building was a "vacant or unoccupied" one within the meaning of the above clause in the policy.

The Court decided against the Company on the ground that what was meant by the clause was a vacancy or desertion of the building in its ordinary undestroyed condition.

ESTABLISHED 1873.

Standard Bank

of CANADA

QUARTERLY DIVIDEND NOTICE No. 108

NOTICE is hereby given that a Dividend at the rate of THIRTEEN PER CENT. PER ANNUM upon the Capital Stock of this Bank has this day been declared for the quarter ending October 31st, 1917, and that the same will be payable at the Head Office in this City, and at its branches on and after Thursday, the 1st day of November, 1917, to Shareholders of the 20th October, 1917.

By Order of the Board,

C. H. EASSON
General Manager.

Toronto, September 21st, 1917.