

### CHANGES IN THE BANK OF BRITISH NORTH AMERICA.

Announcement is made that Mr. H. Stikeman, general manager of the Bank of British North America, will retire, and will be succeeded by Mr. H. B. Mackenzie, superintendent of branches.

The change takes effect as at December 1, and general regret will be felt throughout Canadian banking circles, that it has been rendered necessary owing to Mr. Stikeman's ill-health. The retiring General Manager has seen no fewer than 43 years' service with the institution which he has guided as general manager for many years, his experience including periods of service both in London and New York in addition to the prolonged period of his residence in Canada. There will be a very widely expressed hope that with the laying down of his onerous and responsible duties, such an improvement in Mr. Stikeman's health will take place that he will be able to enjoy long and thoroughly that rest to which his services to his bank and to Canadian banking in general so justly entitle him.

Mr. H. B. Mackenzie, the new General Manager, is a Canadian by birth, and entered the service of the Bank of British North America in 1887, after having begun his banking career with the Canadian Bank of Commerce. His later service includes the superintendency of central branches with headquarters at Winnipeg, from which position he was transferred to the position of superintendent of branches, which he now vacates for the general managership.

The new superintendent of branches is Mr. James Anderson, who since 1905 has been the bank's chief inspection. Mr. Anderson has been with the Bank of British North America since 1889.

### CANADIAN BANK OF COMMERCE OPENS NEW BUILDING AT WINNIPEG.

On Saturday, the formal inauguration took place of the new main office in Winnipeg of the Canadian Bank of Commerce. The new building adjoins the 12-story structure of the Union Trusts Company, on Main Street. It is of massive appearance, being six stories high from the street with a basement and sub-basement. The front is constructed of grey granite and eight heavy columns extend from the first floor to the cornice. The banking chamber is three stories in height in the interior, rising to a dome. The floor is tiled and the walls for more than half the height are lined with marble. Private rooms for the officers of the company are on the Main Street frontage, access to these and to the bank chamber proper being through magnificent bronze doors. The interior fittings are in perfect harmony with the rest of the work and the bank is generally agreed to be among the finest in the country.

By way of inauguration a luncheon was held, about 300 guests being present from all parts of Canada and several points in the United States. The chairman was Mr. Vere C. Brown, superintendent of western branches of the bank and the principal address was made by Sir Edmund Walker, president. Sir Edmund referred optimistically to the future of Winnipeg as a manufacturing centre. He is also reported as stating that he was in favor of the proposals which have been lately put forward that the banks should be allowed to lend money on grain while it is in the hands of farmers.

### FIRE INSURANCE A TAX.

The payment of a fire insurance premium, fundamentally considered, is the payment of a tax. The supervisors of this taxation are the fire insurance companies, who make the assessments upon which this tax is collected—not haphazardly but upon a scientific basis—administer the funds and for their remuneration retain by way of commission what remains over from the premiums collected after they have paid all the claims upon them for losses, made a suitable provision for future losses and paid their expenses. Contrary to the very general impression, the fire companies' remuneration in Canada on an average is not upon a lavish scale. During the 43 years which elapsed between Confederation and the end of 1911, the fire companies operating in Canada under Dominion license paid out in losses 62.96 of the premiums they received, and as their expenses could hardly have been less than, say, 33 1-3 per cent., it follows that the companies retained less than 4 p.c. profits, that is, before making necessary provision for future losses, and putting by their reserve for unearned premiums. These figures are, of course, average figures. Many of the companies have made a much better commission or profit than this. But that is because they have been conducted with more than the average economy or skill. And there are many other companies who have made no profits at all, but who on the other hand, have found losses and expenses gobble up the whole of the premiums they have collected and something over—sometimes a good deal over—and so have had to give up the business.

For what purpose is the fire insurance tax? For the purpose of distributing over a large part of the community, the losses which happen to fall upon one individual. Fire insurance is, in fact, under another aspect, a system of co-operation. Losses which would ruin one man if he had to bear them by himself are borne with comparative ease, when distributed *pro rata* throughout the community. This co-operation does not, of course, replace capital which has been destroyed by fire; that is an impossibility. Merely there is a distribution of the loss. The actual loss of wealth caused by the fire to those who pay fire insurance premiums and to the nation as a whole, remains. Nothing can replace that.

The problem that now confronts us is to reduce this sheer loss by fire to a minimum, since it is only in the long run by a reduction of this loss that any marked reduction of the tax can be secured. The tax in Canada is now in fact in process of being reduced. Whereas in 1906 it was 1.53 p.c., last year it had come down to 1.35 p.c. That reduction would be accounted for to a great extent by the new buildings which everywhere throughout the Dominion are replacing older ones, and by the more extensive use, in the case of factory risks, of automatic sprinklers. To some extent, it may be anticipated that the continued rebuilding of Canadian cities