

## LIFE ASSURANCE LEGISLATION

Whither Are We Drifting?—Italy's State Programme  
—Dominion Government's Annuity Campaign

BY R. W. BARTON, A.I.A.

"A large element of the public seem to be obsessed with the idea that every kind of ill can be cured speedily and every popular want gratified by legislation. Public taste and public morals are put under the special custodianship of the legislators, no less than the furtherance of the ends of justice. The abolition of poverty and improvidence is sought through the beneficent intermediary of State bounties," is how a writer in a United States journal aptly sized up the modern craze for legislation. To support this we have the report of the New York Legislature that 3,895 bills have already been introduced there this year.

The same tendency in our own and other countries is so obvious as to need only its recital to the reader.

The executives of the great life companies are watching this craze for legislation with some concern. It affects them vitally.

Life assurance contracts from their very nature extend over a long term of years. The contingencies of 20 or even 50 and more years hence have to be provided for by a premium unalterably fixed to-day. Yet legislation of all kinds is continually being introduced without regard to this fact. Not only legislation which compels the companies to do this for their policyholders or restrains them from doing that and the other, but also in the form of taxation. Dominion and Provincial taxation we know; but what shall we say when even municipalities controlling villages of a few hundred people exact a \$50 tax before the company can write business therein.

#### Built by Thrifty Folk.

The fact is, the accumulated funds of life companies are attracting the lustful eyes of socialistic and spendthrift governments and councils.

It is the thrifty amongst the people who have built up these funds for the protection of their families and homes. It behoves them to watch, and to help the companies to watch, and to resist any drastic legislation or insidious taxation that may from time to time be brought forward, whether federal, provincial or municipal.

The activity in insurance legislation reached its limit in Europe last year when Italy passed a law granting to the government a monopoly of life assurance. Even their domestic companies are compelled to retire from business within 10 years of the passing of the act. While to gain favor with the masses it is further enacted that this government company shall pay all profit derived from the thrifty middle and business classes to the aged and invalid workmen's pension fund. This is not the time to discuss all the motives for this act or its probable effects, but it seems likely to tend to discourage life assurance in Italy—a surely undesirable consummation.

#### Dominion Government and Life Annuities.

Life annuities are so generally associated with life assurance companies that any active encroachment in this field by a government may be considered a general one. It has certainly been the custom for governments to grant annuities to such as seek that class of protection, but it has not been the custom to actively compete with the life companies by extensive advertising and canvassing. Our own Dominion government has, however, gone actively into the field. Witness the new posters advertising the government annuities. There is an element of Gilbertian humor in being in the position to tax one's competitors. Is it possible the provincial government will join the scramble? Or perhaps the city of Toronto instead of hawking debentures might raise funds by selling life annuities.

The chairman of the Scottish and Canadian General Investment Company, at the recent annual meeting at Edinburgh, said in part: "As a large portion of our capital is invested in Canadian securities, it is gratifying to observe the continued prosperity of the Dominion. Notwithstanding the condition of the money market, trade in Canada has never been more active, and her agricultural interests are in a very sound position. The railways are making preparations for gigantic developments which cannot fail to have an appreciable effect on the prosperity of the country. The enormous flow of immigration of the best class appears to increase rather than to diminish, and this influx of population augments the demand for money."

## BRITISH COLUMBIA

Land is in Demand—Federal Estimates—Work on  
Vancouver Island

(Staff correspondence.)

Vancouver, May 26th.

That there is a big demand for land in British Columbia was shown this week by the large number of people who gathered at New Westminster, when two hundred forty-acre blocks of homesteads were thrown open. The apportionment took place on Monday, but by Saturday last over three hundred applicants had gathered, and later this number was considerably augmented. It is stated that even in this instance speculators were able to get some of the land. In cases of this kind, the authorities should see that bona fide settlers have first chance. The present trouble is that all good land anywhere near any line of railway or town is held by people who have no intention of turning it to account, but who have been able to secure possession at a low price and are waiting for a buyer.

#### Adapted for Use but High Priced.

The man who cultivates the land is not always the man who has the money to spare to buy land.

The same point came up in an indirect way when Mr. John A. Lee, former mayor of New Westminster, spoke before the Progress Club. Mr. Lee mentioned particularly the need of industries, and pointed out what excellent sites were available on the Fraser River, and also the land on the south side of the river that might be closely cultivated. The whole of the lower Fraser valley is particularly well adapted for the growing of the produce that is used in the big cities on the coast, but which now is imported to a very large extent. If people get on the land, the question of a working population for industries will be largely solved. As it now stands, however, land in the Fraser valley is very high in price, tracts being laid out in town lots for the benefit of people in the east and other places distant to a more or less degree, who know little of what they are buying.

#### Development and Finances.

Mr. R. Marpole, western executive of the Canadian Pacific Railway, has returned from a trip to Vancouver Island, on which he was accompanied by Mr. H. J. Cambie, chief engineer; Mr. H. E. Beasley, general superintendent of the Eastern and Northern, and Mr. Campbell Sweeney, general manager of the Bank of Montreal in British Columbia. Much money is being spent on Canadian Pacific Railway construction on the Island, and the officials report that development of the lumber industry is so great on the east coast that transportation facilities will have to be materially increased.

General development on the Pacific Coast of Canada is indicated by the large amount in the federal estimates this year. In the supplementary estimates are appropriations of \$1,370,000, and the aggregate figures include grants for grain elevators, harbor improvements, post office improvements, drill hall, wharves, dredging plant, in short, for every line of which expansion is being made. That these amounts are necessary show that development outlined from time to time is actually taking place.

The Marquis of Exeter is a visitor to the coast, along with him being Mr. N. Goddard Jackson and Mr. Fleetwood Heskell, two capitalists of London, England. The Marquis of Exeter already owns land north of Ashcroft which he bought last year. Discussing the financial situation, the visitors were of the opinion that while it might create a temporary dullness in business in Western Canada, it will not be without its good effect since it will help to eliminate much of the speculative features in real estate operation. They do not look for much improvement in the money market, for after present difficulties are removed England will require money to carry on industrial and commercial enterprises, trade being now of record proportions.

That considerable money is still available for real estate buys was shown this week when government land in the vicinity of Vancouver was auctioned. If there is a chance to make money, the purchaser is to be found, and these lots, some distance from the heart of the city, went as high as \$2,750.

The capital stock of the Cattanach Advertising Agency, Limited, of Winnipeg, has been increased from \$20,000 to \$50,000, by the issue of 300 shares of new stock of \$100 each.

The British America Assurance Company has been licensed to transact hail insurance in Canada, in addition to the business of fire insurance for which it is already licensed. Mr. W. B. Meikle, Toronto, is chief agent for the company.