WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION IN ONTARIO.

Evidence is beginning to appear that things are not going altogether smoothly with the scheme of Government administered workmen's compensation in the Province of Ontario. According to a provisional balance sheet covering the operations of 1916, there was last year a remarkable increase in the number of claims reported. The total claims for 1915 accidents were 9,239, while for 1916 accidents, 16,192 claims had been dealt with before the close of the year, and hundreds more remained to be dealt with. Industrial conditions obviously do not wholly account for this remarkable development in the number of claims. It is in fact inconceivable that the number of industrial accidents in Ontario calling for compensation showed an 80 per cent. increase in 1916 over those of 1915. Either in 1915, claims for all accidents were not promptly made and the Commission was accordingly working on false premises, or, what is more probable, the Commission did not finally dispose of numerous claims arising in 1915. Some men who had sustained accidents in 1915 came back in 1916, and their claims were filed as new, although in fact they were merely continuations of or additions to old claims. This is a very well-known phenomenon in workmen's compensation insurance. A workman may sustain an accident in one year, receive compensation and in course of time, apparently make a complete recovery. Twelve months or two years later, there may be some new development of the injury, necessitating additional compensation. Workmen's compensation claims can never be regarded in the same light as, for instance, fire insurance claims, which can be disposed of finally and completely, when once an adjustment has been completed. Workmen's compensation claims are liable to additions at any time for years after the filing of the original claim. Whether the Ontario Compensation Board overlooked this very elementary fact of the business they are charged to administer, we do not know. But the astonishing increase in the number of claims reported in 1916 suggests that they did, and that they started out with assessments generally much under the level at which they should have been made in order to care for this feature. As time goes on, these continued claims will, of course, largely increase in numbers, playing further havoc with the Commission's finances.

DISASTER RESERVE INSUFFICIENT.

That in many cases, the Commissioners started out by charging insufficient rates is admitted. Ten of the thirty-four classes in Schedule I. show provisional deficits for 1916, the deficit in the case of the millingclass running to $79,246. The Commissioners explain that "estimated surpluses are being reduced and estimated deficits made up by retroactive changes of rate in a number of cases," an ingenuous reference to a process which must be pleasant indeed to the manufacturers concerned in making up deficits, and having practical experience of the glorious uncertainty of the pay-as-you-go assessment system. The Commissioners suggest that a part of the deficit in the milling class, of $79,246—this deficit having mainly resulted from the loss of life in the Quaker Oats fire at Peterborough—might be made up by allocation of part of the "disaster reserve." But this "disaster reserve" is only $33,486, which would not go far towards making up the deficit. The total payments collected from the milling class for 1916, were only $29,145. Evidently assessments will have to be largely raised in this class, even if the Board do not follow their advertised policy of meeting losses as they occur and thus requiring the milling companies to pay up the whole $79,000 straight away.

The Ontario scheme is young yet—the end of 1916 marks the completion of only its second year of operations. The accumulative character of workmen's compensation claims is becoming evident, but the ascent has only just begun. Probably enough there will be of necessity higher assessments in many classes as time goes on and the hard-headed Ontario manufacturers will have ample opportunities of appreciating the beauties of a system of workmen's compensation where there is never any certainty of the amount of the charges for which they are liable, and under which the careful manufacturer has the wonderful privilege of paying up in hard cash for the accidents of his careless competitor.

FIRE UNDERWRITERS' EXPERIENCE IN UNITED STATES.

Stock companies reporting to the New York Insurance Department sustained an underwriting loss of 2.46 per cent. in 1916, according to statistics presented by Mr. R. M. Bissell, president of the Hartford Fire Insurance Company, at the annual meeting of the National Board of Fire Underwriters held in New York last week. The ten-year record of the same companies for 1907-1916 inclusive shows an underwriting profit for the period equal to 1.67 per cent. The ten-year calculation does not, of course, include the San Francisco losses.

President Bissell also gave statistics showing that the taxation exclusive of real estate taxation, upon 199 fire companies throughout the United States in 1916 amounted to $12,190,605, a proportion of no less than 101.57 per cent. of the net income, which is arrived at after deduction from net premiums written, of net losses incurred, net expenses exclusive of taxes and increase in liabilities. The percentage of taxation to the amount of net premiums is 2.87.

The recently amalgamated Eagle and British Dominions General Insurance Company, Ltd., of London, announces the absorption of the Sceptre Life Association, Ltd., of London. The latter company was established in 1864, and does a small life and annuity business.

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The New York State Insurance Fund (workmen's compensation) depleted its surplus by $124,220 during 1916, demonstrating that its rates are inadequate. The State Insurance Department is supporting proposals to make the fund controllable by the Department, so that the adequacy of its rates can be ensured.

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The Metropolitan Life, the Ætna Life and the New York Life are offering the services of their field organizations to the U. S. Government to assist in the selling of Liberty Loan bonds. This action is taken in addition to plans adopted by them for aiding their employees to subscribe to the loan on the installment plan.