

BUSINESS MEN AND THE FIRE WASTE.

The action of the Berlin, Ont., Board of Trade in taking notice of the problem of the Dominion's fire waste is a commendable example of business men's energy that deserves wide imitation. The Berlin business men have passed resolutions calling for action by the Commission of Conservation to take up this work with expert assistance for the purpose of formulating recommendations to the different provinces, and is asking boards of trade and municipal authorities throughout Canada for support in the action they have taken. Passing pious resolutions is a not uncommon way of doing nothing and it would perhaps be well not to expect too much from boards of trade and municipal authorities in the way of loyal following of the Canadian Berlin's lead. The chief value of the present action lies not indeed in that but in its indication of realization that the fire waste is essentially a business man's question. The awakening of business men throughout Canada to the fact that our preposterous fire waste—the highest per capita in the world—is something that concerns them vitally and not merely the fire companies and people with time enough on their hands to run a hobby, may be slow enough. But there are encouraging signs from time to time—and the Berlin manifesto is one of them—that the awakening is coming about. Mainly, the fire waste is a matter of dollars and cents, of so much wealth—\$3.15 per head per annum in Canada—being flung away and as much wasted as if it were dropped in the middle of the Atlantic. Nobody pretends that the fire waste can be stopped entirely, but that it might with comparative ease be very greatly reduced is apparent to anyone with two eyes in his head and the ability to use them intelligently. It is not going too far to say that 40 to 50 per cent. of Canada's fire waste could be avoided were people educated up to a sense of being reasonably careful instead of grossly careless, were strict building by-laws properly administered and did the laws of the various provinces impose sufficient penalties upon those who waste and endanger not only their own property but that of the community as a whole. There are some signs that a new leaf is being turned out in Canada's development. Hitherto, we have developed as carelessly as might be, with a fine disregard for waste, and tolerating conditions and methods that in an older and more thrifty community would be regarded with something like dismay. It is now being seen that production is of more importance than the price of lots, and that a man's real wealth depends more upon his balance in the bank than upon the number of automobiles he runs. At a time when every effort is being made to stimulate the production of real wealth and to strengthen the economic position of the country, it should be easy for business men to see the vital importance of cutting down waste which is strictly

preventable and thus of increasing generally the wealth and economic prosperity of the Dominion.

FIRE UNDERWRITERS' LOSS IN UNITED STATES.

Fire insurance business in the United States in 1914 resulted in an underwriting loss to the companies of 4.21 per cent., according to statistics presented by Mr. William N. Kremer, president of the National Board of Fire Underwriters, at the forty-ninth annual meeting in New York last week. It was also pointed out that notwithstanding the unprofitable condition of the business the ratio of taxation on insurance premiums was steadily increasing, and that the taxes exacted from the business increased from \$8,501,927 in 1913 to \$9,120,508 in 1914.

President Kremer said that the statistics of loss meant that the premiums collected in the past year were not sufficient to meet losses incurred and business expenses by 4.21 per cent. Only the profits from the investment of capital and surplus contributed by the stockholders and the earnings of funds previously collected enabled the companies to continue to pay dividends, he said. The volume of premiums paid to 191 companies throughout the country reached \$333,647,016, an increase of about \$9,000,000, while the losses incurred were \$200,720,782, an increase of nearly \$28,000,000. The taxes exacted from the business increased from \$8,501,927 in 1913 to \$9,120,508 in 1914, an increase of 1.24 per cent. "It is easily seen," said President Kremer, "that, with the agitation for reduced premiums and increased taxation and with no apparent diminution in the fire waste of the country, the fire insurance underwriters have not an easy problem before them."

GREAT-WEST LIFE APPOINTMENT.

Mr. C. C. Ferguson, actuary of the Great-West Life of Winnipeg, since 1907, has been appointed by the directors to take general charge of the affairs of this highly-successful company in succession to the late Mr. J. H. Brock.

Mr. Ferguson will be widely congratulated upon this appointment by life insurance men who will feel that the promotion has been thoroughly well earned. Still on the sunny side of forty, Mr. Ferguson, who is a Prince Edward Islander by birth, graduated at McGill, where he was awarded a gold medal in the class of 1900. He at once joined the Canada Life's actuarial department and remained there till 1907, when he received the appointment of actuary of the Great-West Life. Mr. Ferguson is a fellow of the Actuarial Society of America and is well known by a number of learned papers on actuarial subjects.

In his new position, Mr. Ferguson has been called to heavy responsibilities. The Great-West Life is well known for the energy and enterprise with which its affairs have been conducted and keen interest will be evinced by life insurance men in the results of Mr. Ferguson's administration. But they have no doubt of the outcome.

The year 1914 seems to have been a most unprofitable one so far as the fire companies are concerned from an underwriting standpoint.—N. Y. *Insurance Supt's Report.*