

GOVERNMENT MARINE INSURANCE.

If the Commission, after correcting the recklessness and other abuses in the present pilotage service, find the insurance rates still maintained at an excessive level, the entire question of marine insurance might well be made the subject of an investigation and be dealt with in a comprehensive manner by the national government through the Commission.

On this question the Honorable George E. Foster, Minister of Trade and Commerce, has made the following observations:—

"As regards the insurance question it is one which in some way must be dealt with. The Government is entirely sympathetic, and will aid so far as it possibly can, any endeavor to solve it, but primarily it is one for the shipping people to take up and press, and also to organize and carry out. Any influence that can be brought towards stirring up sentiment in this direction will be helpful.

It seems of little use to spend immense sums of money in arranging for landways and waterways for the export of products if we cannot get tonnage to our ports to carry them out, and in so far as too high or discriminating insurance rates work against us, we ought to be alert to find a remedy."

The best and indeed only effective solution of this question may ultimately be found in Government Marine Insurance. The Lloyds assert that the insurance cannot be maintained at rates cheaper than those which at present prevail, but this is simply the claim usually made by private corporations in opposition to any movement whereby it is proposed that the state or municipalities should supplant them in their profitable activities. In addition to numerous earlier instances of the groundless nature of such claims, one might cite the recent case, in which private corporations declared that the high voltage proposed by the Ontario Hydro-Electric Commission was technically impossible and, under their contract, commercially unpracticable. Both of these assertions, which were made on exceedingly plausible grounds, have been belied by actual experience. Similar results may be anticipated from an investigation of insurance and other phases of the navigation problem by a proper business Commission.

Lower insurance rates would lead to a greater tonnage plying to the ports in question, and the increased competition between vessels would bring in turn, lower freight rates.

LENGTHENING OF THE SEASON OF NAVIGATION.

The U. S. Marine Association has petitioned the Department in charge at Washington, to prolong the season of navigation from six weeks to two months. With the assistance of ice breakers and of wireless communication such an extension of the season, under proper direction, would be quite feasible. During the extremely cold winter of 1912, a steel tug kept the harbor at Fort William open sufficiently for the changing of vessels to and from the grain elevators for loading grain. At Sault Ste. Marie, in the same winter, the small passenger ferry had no difficulty in keeping a channel open across the river; and in the Russian Baltic ports, under very similar conditions, navigation is kept open practically the year round.