

WINNIPEG HAD HEAVY FIRE LOSS

During First Three Months of Year—Fire Commissioner Lindback Issues Important Statement.

Mr. A. Lindback, fire commissioner for Manitoba, has issued an important report on fire losses in the city of Winnipeg for this year. He says:—"The figures as given are correct and represent the actual financial losses caused by fires in the city, the last three months; they exceed the losses of the same three months in 1910, \$345,026 and for 1909 by \$325,532.

"These big figures are mostly due to the fire in the Kelly block, Bannatyne avenue, January 14th, and that in the McLaughlin block, March 3rd. Both of these buildings were stocked full of expensive merchandise and left unguarded, and in the case of the Kelly building, even unlocked, so that when the fire started during the night it got a firm hold and was not discovered until it burst through the windows.

"Obviously we cannot stop fires starting, particularly in a climate as severe and rigorous as ours; but by ordinary care and the use of common sense, and enacting and enforcing sane and common sense building by-laws we can bring these losses down to a reasonable minimum.

"We have the building of a new and prosperous city and should take particular care in new building and constructing in such a manner that the city becomes an improvement on all large cities which have been built before. We cannot plead ignorance nor the want of example, as within these same three months, the State of New York has experienced two fires that we will hope may never be duplicated in the province of Manitoba or in the city of Winnipeg.

Latest Instance Cited.

"The State House in Albany was considered a modern fireproof building, so much so, that it was held unnecessary to carry any insurance, and yet within a few hours a loss of \$500,000,000 in money was entailed, without mentioning the intrinsic value of the documents and records destroyed.

"In the city of New York, a factory a little larger, but no worse constructed than a number of apartment houses and other buildings in which people are gathered in this city, took fire in broad daylight, with the result, that 160 girls and other employees met a horrible death because of criminal neglect on the part of the owners and some of the officials in the city.

Cause of Damage.

"Nineteen thousand six hundred and fifty-three fires in three months by overheated and defective furnaces and chimneys bear witness here of a similar carelessness and neglect of inspection; and our records for 1910 as a whole prove that while our protection for facilities in the shape of fire apparatus and high water pressure, may so far have left us free from widespread conflagrations, the lack of proper preventive remedies and the exercising of common care has caused the city of Winnipeg a loss of over a million dollars in 1910, and for the first three months of 1911 half a million dollars.

"With these figures and facts before us I think any sane person will agree with me, that if we know there is a fire while it is yet in its incipient state, we can avoid many of these heavy losses. This has been my contention from the beginning and was my reason for the introduction of the automatic alarm system about two years ago, which since then has proven its practicability and efficiency by stopping five fires in their incipency in 1910, and by another remarkable stop on the night of the 11th, when about 1 o'clock a.m. a fire started in the oil vault in Thomas Black's warehouse on Lombard street.

Might Have Been Heavy Loss.

"This fire would have been particularly disastrous if it had not been discovered in time, as it started among a number of barrels of varnish in the basement of the building; nobody was in the building at the time, but the automatic alarm immediately sent in the call and rang the outside gong so that the caretaker was awakened, but the fire department was there before he reached the building. The cause of this fire was spontaneous combustion in sawdust soaked with oil, and but for the timely alarm, would in a very few minutes have developed into a very serious oil fire.

"I wish to state that I am not calling attention to this for the sake of exploiting any particular automatic alarm device; but let the facts be considered as they are, and with that in view it must be conceded that it is time that all whose duty it is to protect life and property wake up to the fact, that that can only be done by careful and constant work and that mere talking will not accomplish anything."

January—Cause:—

Cigar stubs and cigarettes	\$ 338
Coal dust explosion	10
Defective chimney and furnace	608
Hot ashes	50
Match (careless with)	1,660
Overheated stoves, furnaces and pipes	6,659
Pouring kerosene on fire	25
Unknown, but suspicious of incendiary	361,633
Sparks from furnace, chimney and engines	3,834
Thawing pipes	321
	\$375,139

February—Cause:—

Defective chimney	\$ 5,107
Defective stove	2,421
Gasoline explosion	2,941
Hot ashes	31
Match (children with)	534
Overheated stovepipes	268
Sparks	10
Smokers (careless)	174
Spontaneous combustion	50
Thawing water pipes	290
	\$11,826

March—Cause:—

Electric wires	\$19,154
Matches	648
Defective chimney	452
Overheated pipes	4,138
Sparks	20
Gasoline explosion	200
Spirit lamp explosion	12
Spontaneous combustion	2,589
Coal oil lamp explosion	1,442
Candle upset	200
Explosion of chemical	20
Thawing pipes	10
Hot ashes	30
	\$28,915

Total for first three months of year 1911, \$415,879.

MR. FIELDING AND PREFERENCE.

In answer to queries of Mr. Borden in the House last week respecting the Canadian trade agreement and British preference, Mr. Fielding said:—

"It has been intimated by many opponents of this agreement, that on making it the government had taken a step which would prevent them from increasing the British preference. It was indicated, especially perhaps in England, that an offer of imperial preference was likely to be made to us and that this agreement would prevent us from accepting it. Consequently I have from time to time denied that there is anything in this agreement to prevent us from increasing the preference if we desire to do it. It was in that sense that I sent the telegram to Lord Strathcona.

"I do not agree," continued Mr. Fielding, "that changes were foreshadowed in that telegram. At the time I introduced the agreement I said that it might be necessary to make some changes. I repeat that statement to-day. But let me say at once that, if such changes are made, they will be in small matters, and they will not include an increase in the preference to 50 per cent. The farmers have asked for free agricultural implements. We have told them frankly that we cannot grant them that, and we are going to persuade them that that is not in the best interests of the country at present. They have asked for an increase in the preference to 50 per cent., and we are going to tell them frankly that we cannot make that change, that the manufactures of Canada cannot be carried on if that change is made. We are going to say to them that by bringing in this agreement we are meeting their demands to a large extent, and we are going to ask them not to press that matter, because it would be a disturbing influence, while reciprocity will have no disturbing influence, but will work for the general advantage of Canada."

Mr. A. B. Mitchell, of the head office staff of Sterling Bank of Canada, who for the past few months has been on sick leave in Scotland, will shortly return.

Branches of the Canadian Bank of Commerce have been opened at Bengough on the Maryfield extension of the Canadian Northern Railway, and at Biggar, the fourth divisional point on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, west of Winnipeg.