

Insurance News and Views

Education for Insurance Men

United States to Have an Institution which will Co-operate With Local Societies to Afford Best Possible Training for Insurance Business

Within the next few weeks the Insurance Institute of America will be incorporated. Following that event the leaders in the movement look forward to the launching throughout the United States, of a campaign of organization of local insurance societies or clubs for the purpose of extending to young men and women engaged in the insurance business facilities for receiving systematic instructions. This is going to require some money, and the insurance companies will be called upon to contribute.

This movement has much to recommend it. In the first place, it started right. In several

localities insurance men, who recognized the need of instruction for themselves and their fellows in the business, organized societies. It was not a case of a ready-made educational system, offered by well meaning outsiders to the men in the business. It grew out of a desire of men to help themselves. The Insurance Institute of America came into existence only after a number of local societies were in active operation, and saw that they could help each other by organizing a central body and, to some extent, standardizing their work. The growth was from the ground up, not from the top down.

The students from the beginning have been people already engaged in insurance, whose desire to learn more was sufficiently earnest to induce them to pay money and sacrifice their leisure. Such people are worth helping. The instructors have been practical insurance men. The system has been one of adding instruction in principles to the knowledge of details which the students were acquiring in their daily work. It has not been a system of education outside of the business, but inside.

It has usually taken many years for those engaged in any profession or business to recognize that training by experience could profitably be supplemented by systematic instruction. For a long time American lawyers entered the profession after a course of reading and copying papers in a lawyer's office and "pettifogging" in justice courts. Now men admitted to the bar usually have to qualify as to general education and complete a course in a law school. Men became engineers by carrying a chain for a surveyor, working in a mine or learning their trade as machinists. Now the college graduate hundreds of them every year. The tire factories at Akron and the mail order houses at Chicago hold out little prospect for advancement to young men who have not college educations. Business generally is coming to a recognition of the fact that education outside of that given in the school of experience is essential, or at least desirable.

The business of insurance has passed the point where it can afford to depend so largely upon the University of Hard Knocks to train those who are to conduct it. Comparison of the very long list of companies which have retired with the short list of those in successful operation indicates that something has been wrong. One thing which was wrong was too many men trying to run a business of which they were far from being masters. Education would not have corrected this defect entirely, but it would have helped.

Even within a decade the developments in insurance have taxed the capacity of the brainiest men in the business. It was comparatively simple to conduct a fire insurance company and write limited lines in a few States; it is decidedly complex to write fire and marine, automobile and all the side lines in forty-eight States and in foreign countries, to deal with trust lines, traction lines, cotton, chemical plants, oil and a hundred other special hazards, to operate under forty-nine systems of laws and through a dozen organizations. To know the insurance business now means much more than it did even a few years ago.

It is patent to anybody, that the higher the capacity of the men in a business the more that business thrives and the better it stands in the public estimation.

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Correspond with E. J. Harvey, Esq., Supervisor of Agencies.

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