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INSURANCE COMPANIES

It is an admitted fact that the Insurance Companies are doing their best to prevent the success of the Beneficiary Societies of the day. They, of course, show a great interest in having the people realize their expectations in the case of death. So much so is this the case that they are careful to tell the people that while there is certainty in the Companies there is very great uncertainty in the Societies. We remember, some years ago, hearing these diligent business agents say that the average age of the Beneficiary Societies is five years. Since then some of these have attained the age of ten and fifteen years, and some are even older than this, and, we are happy to say, show no signs of feebleness, but on the contrary, are ever increasing in growth and strength. Even the level assessment orders are not yet dead, and according to the prophecy they were to find an early grave. The graded assessment orders would live a little longer. The early demise scare having failed other tactics are resorted to. The runners through the country have to a certain extent subsided and the masters of the situation are at work with the governments, Local and Dominion, to pass a law that will decapitate these troublemakers of their financial grab-bag.

The old story of a thousand men starting to insure each other for a thousand dollars at such a scale of payment that each, taking a fixed death rate, will in his life time pay his proportion of the thousand dollars so that each one when he dies will have the thousand to his credit, is sometimes used still, and they never forget to say that in the societies the last man of the thousand will have enormous assessments to pay and when he dies leave nothing behind.

A beautiful picture, doubtless, for the insurance boys, and death to the Societies! Well, they are not dead yet, nor has the last man made his appearance paying enormous sums to keep good his covenant to his dead brothers. Poor fellows, they fail to see that the law, that, with a fixed average death rate at an average cost, will keep the Society running for one year, with the healthy average of business prosperity, will keep it running for a century. Therefore, reaching the age where the amount expected can be paid, and working on the plane of a lively and faithful industry, there is no such possibility as failure to the Society. It is as sure of success as the Dry Goods Merchant, the Hardware man, Grocer or any other branch of staple goods. The need creates the supply, and the supply stimulates the need; so that the healthy growth and continuance is assured from year to year and decade to decade. The insurance companies could be no blessing to humanity unless they had a healthy patronage and loyal support. What an utter absurdity it would be for any Beneficiary Society man to hypothesize a basis for these companies, and upon it prophesy a failure. We would be ashamed of the impudence and ignorance of the man who would do so; but his course would be more unreasonable and reprehensible than that of those who are airing their prescience by foretelling the failure of the Beneficiary Societies. If they are faithfully worked the prophet of evil will be as old as Methuselah and his grandfather before there will be the dimmest forecast of failure, and even then he will look in vain.

It is no more proof of the weakness of a properly organized and efficiently worked Beneficiary Order, to say that Societies of a similar kind have gone down than to say that Insurance Companies cannot stand because some have failed. Beneficiary Societies may fail again, but never if they are properly worked.

The truest proof of their stability lies in a diligent, intelligent and loyal membership, before whom the accounts and detailed business of the order is laid for examination, criticism or enquiry. Herein lies an important element of security. To this may be added if desirable, inspection by a Government agent, or, for that

matter, by any competent and properly disposed person. But to require such a Society to pile up a financial security in the shape of a Government deposit or reserve fund, when there can be no possible need for the same is to make an unnecessary and unreasonable draft upon the pockets of the members, and at once concede to Insurance Companies the ground that has been already taken by them.

Where insurance is entered into for speculative purposes, or those of general financial profit, and the insurance secured to the policy-holders is only one condition of the contract, and where there lies the possibility of allowing the greed of the Directorate to seek more the profits on stocks than the welfare of the policy-holders, there should be Reserves and Deposits, and all the rest of the financial machinery necessary to secure the latter in his promised money.

In so far therefore as concerns the present effort to make the insurance law of reserves apply to purely Beneficiary Fraternal Societies, it is done in the interest of the money-making Insurance Companies. It is easy for them to use large sums of money to fee agents, and experts in finance to pull the wool over the eyes of the Government and the members of our Parliaments, and by some rule of financial oppression to increase the expenses of the Beneficiary Societies.

There should, however, be clear-sightedness enough in the members of a paternal government not to be blinded against the interests of the people, by the self-interested, and ex parte arguments of wealthy insurance corporations, who have made themselves rich by the handling of the peoples money, and now ask the Government to assist them in carrying out a system of repression as against tens of thousands of our people who are satisfied with the convenience, moderate cost, and safety of their provision for help to their families in the case of their early demise.

No Government can justify itself for accepting the statement of interested companies and passing a law for them that will work to the disadvantage of thousands of as good subjects of Her Majesty and as intelligent voters as can be found in the Dominion of Canada.

We thus speak because in all probability, the Insurance Companies Bill, that was laid over at the last meeting of Parliament at Ottawa will come up again in some form at the present meeting of the House.

Let us not be misunderstood, when we speak of Beneficiary Societies we mean those Orders that have a membership meeting in Lodges regularly and carrying a beneficiary provision as a condition of membership. This provision to be raised by assessments made upon the members when required to meet the death rate, the Society keeping at least one advance assessment constantly on hand.

We do not refer to those Assessment Companies managing their business by a small Board or committee to which the members outside have not the freest access; nor do we refer to those Societies where a monthly assessment is made, whether required or not to meet the present death claims, for these have voluntarily constituted themselves into Insurance Companies to all intents and purposes, and should be treated as such. But the Government that recognizes the right of co-operative organizations for the supply of groceries, dry goods, and the regulation of the relations between the employer and the employed, cannot consistently interfere with the Society that wishes to secure for its members a consideration for which they enter into co-operation and agreement, no matter though rich corporations set themselves to influence the Government against them. All we ask is a faithful examination of the subject, and such protection as manly and able representatives of the people may give to a form of financial provision eminently wise, far-seeing and economical, to men in societies fostering the fraternal spirit and the highest conditions of domestic and fraternal relations towards each other.