of managers and field men and we hope it will be heartily given.

At the last meeting the association took initiative action against the multiple agency evil, and anticipating the same hearty co-operation and support from managers and field men that we received in the overhead writing matter we hope for equally happy results.

WILL MAKE ITS INTENT CLEAR AND ACT JUSTLY.

To avoid any possible misunderstanding of the operations of the association I will state that we shall try in all expressions to make our intent clear, and the association will not juggle that intent for the purpose of convicting or acquitting any one, neither will the association accept any interpretation of its utterances that will unjustly reflect upon any one or improperly relieve any one from violations of the spirit of obligations assumed. For instance, a company having advised the association that it will not practice overhead writing, we shall not look for any loopholes in the language used by the company, nor anticipate mental reservations; and as the greater includes the lesser, we shall consider a company responsible for all the acts of its servants. The advice occasionally given our association, that it should keep all the agents of the United States in the straight and narrow way, is accepted and will be acted upon to the best of our ability; but we shall not consider that our efforts in this line relieve from responsibility those who make the agents, who educate them, and who control them. If a member of the association is found guilty of overhead writing we will co-operate with his companies in applying the penalty; if an agent not a member of the association is found guilty we shall ask his companies to redress the wrong.

I have been requested to emphasize the fact that the National Association of Local Fire Insurance Agents is powerless for evil. This is so evident to me that it seems superfluous to speak of it again, but in deference to the opinion of others I again express my positive conviction on this question in the words of my annual address: "The association can be of great help to the business and to all engaged therein if it makes proper recommendations to its members and prefers proper requests to the companies. If it exceeds or varies from such a line of action it is powerless, and if it persists in such excesses or variations it will be destroyed. The enactment of personal, partisan, sectional, ill-considered or unreasonable legislation would be valueless to the instigators and would inevitably check the progress and diminish the power of our organization."

IN A LIFE AND DEATH STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE.

A prominent manager of a large and well established company, in writing to one of his agents, has said: "The business in my office this year, as in nearly all others, has been exceedingly unprofitable. The premiums have been reduced and the losses up to date do not bid fair to give us a year of profit. I have never worked as hard in my life and have never felt as little encouragement. The business is scarcely worth continuing."

The report of 59 leading companies to the insurance department of Georgia shows that during the first six months of this year the said companies expended over five millions of dollars in excess of their total income.

A large number of agents throughout the country, and an especially large percentage of those doing business in states where it has been adjudged unlawful to maintain uniform rates, are in a life and death struggle for existence, harassed on all sides by unjust legislation, corrupting competition and the trust broker.

These things suggest to me that this fraternal gathering may be an opportunity to discuss something practical that will help to keep agents out of the poor-house, that will make it possible for companies to continue in business, and that will preserve the occupations of field men and managers. Will we not be held responsible in the final accounting if something is not considered to-day that will rescue us all from the dangers which encompass us? The battle between the forces of destruction and preservation is on and it is time that everyone in the business should line up on the right side. The agents appreciate their peril and their duty and with proper opportunity, equipment, and encouragement will not be found wanting.

FAVORS FOR THE TRUST, A CRUMB FOR THE AGENT.

A discouraging thing for local agents is the practice of a few field men and managers of writing grudgingly upon a risk when it is controlled by the local agent and manifesting an uncontrollable appetite for the same risk when they have a chance to secure it in a schedule form from a broker. A small amount at local tariff rate is all they will accept upon a risk from the agent, but when offered by the broker they swallow the whole line at any rate. The jugglery by which the new rate sometimes becomes the tariff rate and the frequent offer to allow the local agent one-third of his usual commission on one-half of the former premium may prevent explosions but will not remove discontent. Such dealings are satisfactory evidence to the assured that his trusted friend, the local agent, has robbed him and that the broker has rescued him from a den of thieves. The agent is thus disgraced and the broker's hold on the business is firmly clinched. One count in the indictment against trusts is the discrimination in prices made by them. Our enemies may well say that such discrimination by managers in favor of trusts, syndicates and monopolies is evidence of the existence of an insurance trust. The excuse for this kind of rate-cutting, "that the other fellow was just going to," is not worth considering. The excuse that it was done "to save the business to the stock companies" is not sufficient. It were better that the mutuals had the business than that loyal agents should be disgraced and embittered and that so keen a weapon should be presented to those who contend that the ratings made by companies are not equitable. The one reason, that the practice can be used as evidence that companies are giving lower rates to trusts than to owners of individual properties, should be sufficient to cause its discontinuance. We must give our lowest rates to individuals, independent firms and to independent corporations if we expect legislatures to allow us to make any rates at all.

FOR UNIFORM, CONSISTENT, SYSTEMATIC RATING.

Present conditions demand more uniform, consistent and systematic methods of rating than generally prevail. Efforts to classify the business and compile records of losses and premiums upon each class for the purpose of finding the fire cost, which is the necessary basis of equitable rating, should not be abandoned. If companies will not join in a general and comprehensive work of this kind, they should at least take it up