

company to show the community its highly laudable desire, to consider policyholders not as so many units who pay premiums, but as men and women whose physical welfare should be its concern, will give to the company a reputation for honest and fair dealing to which it would be justly entitled.

PUBLICITY VALUE.

In the past it has been the tendency of the public, the press and legislature to deprecate the work done by insurance companies rather than to extol it. Even to-day it is not uncommon for a newspaper in commenting upon the good work which an insurance company may have done to omit the name of the company for fear that undue advertising and publicity may be given to the company. On the other hand, it is equally not uncommon and at the same time regrettable that many newspapers do not hesitate to give the widest publicity to an insurance company if in the opinion of its editors it has been guilty of the least infraction of the law or has not done everything that the policyholder might expect. From the purely utilitarian standpoint, welfare work among policyholders has a distinct publicity value. When I speak of publicity I refer to it in its highest sense. Charitable and philanthropic organizations, welfare movements of all kinds do not hesitate to-day to advertise their activities in every possible way. Only a few days ago at a seashore hotel, fans were distributed at all the tables on which the summer work of one of our large New York charities was given in detail. Our newspapers from day to day show similar advertisements of other welfare and charitable movements. Probably all of us frequently receive in our mails, daily letters requesting our support and contributions from agencies of all kinds engaged in social uplift. Their success in securing support depends upon their ability to present to the public the results which they have obtained. Their standing in the community is based altogether upon the success with which they conduct their work.

Since the life insurance companies to-day, in a certain sense, are great social institutions, it is only fitting that they too shall keep the public advised and acquainted with the attempts which are being made to improve the conditions of their policyholders. It is significant to note that where this is done and where it is realized that this form of care for policyholders is inspired by proper motives, the legitimate newspaper press of the country is prepared to give due credit. The life insurance companies of to-day are engaged in an honest business; the competition between them is based on a gentleman's agreement. All are interested to the best of their ability to inculcate the principles of insurance among their constituents so that they may guard themselves against the hazards of life. The insurance companies, equally with other social organizations, are entitled to the proper recognition of their services to the community by the press, by the public, and the legislature.

IMPRACTICABLE VENTURES.

If it were necessary to cite another utilitarian reason for welfare work by insurance companies, the marked changes in insurance thought in the past few years could be referred to. Insurance companies must watch closely the signs of the times. Even in the United States to-day one hears the advocates of State insurance and sees laws enacted authorizing such experiments. In Italy life insurance has been taken entirely out of the hands of private

corporations and been made a State monopoly. The threadbare discussion as to the need of an agency force constantly comes to the front and we constantly hear voiced the opinion of tyros that under States insurance a utopian scheme can be developed in which the agent would no longer be necessary. It would seem that the results in England, in Belgium, in Wisconsin, and most recently the failure of the large insurance society in Dusseldorf, Germany, which attempted to do business largely without agents, would have given sufficient testimony as to the impracticability of such ventures. Nevertheless, the private insurance company is at the bar. Whether we are to have a continuance of private voluntary insurance or the introduction of compulsory insurance will, to my mind, depend entirely upon the way in which the private insurance companies conduct themselves and realize their responsibility and obligation to their policyholders.

A CENTRALIZED BODY.

The question may well be asked whether the smaller insurance companies with comparatively limited financial resources can undertake life extension work of the character indicated in this paper. I am of the impression that they can. It may be that their activities would necessarily be limited in proportion to their financial ability. If it is of interest to this meeting, I may say that I understand plans are on foot in the East to effect an organization which will enable all insurance companies who desire to participate in this work of health conservation without the necessity of special machinery for each company. It is planned to organize an independent central organization; a business corporation, as I understand, whose purpose is to do for all companies, through a centralized system, what is at present being done by a number of individual companies. I am not at liberty at present to go into particulars.

Whether such a centralized body, independent of all insurance companies, will be the medium through which the smaller companies can undertake welfare work or not, I am not prepared to say. I mention the fact here simply to show that the question of human life extension is in the foreground and that evidently reputable business men consider the subject of sufficient importance to attempt to organize a health conservation movement on a purely business basis.

No insurance company to-day can afford to ignore the possibilities that lie in welfare work for policyholders. I have cited distinct utilitarian and good business reasons why it is advisable for insurance companies to enter this field. The greatest reason, however, and one which overshadows all the others, is the responsibility which insurance managers owe to their policyholders. The funds which insurance companies hold belong in the last analysis to their policyholders; the latter have invested these in the main in a spirit of unselfishness and frequently of self-sacrifice. They are using the machinery of the company to make provision for themselves and their families against life's risks and accidents. The modern attitude of an insurance company toward its policyholders is primarily one of stewardship. It is incumbent upon every company to live up to this sense of stewardship, to hold each as a sacred trust and to do everything that lies in its power to improve and better the living conditions of its policyholders.