

Cut out the rake off. The Good Book says, 'Share ye one another's burdens.' The insurance companies say, 'Share ye one another's burdens and pay us a rake off.' The State of Massachusetts, through its savings banks, has cut out the rake off."

The Standard, of Boston, has made detailed and careful investigation into methods employed, and results obtained under the savings bank insurance scheme during the six months ending with the close of December. And the conclusion arrived at is that the promoters' hopes are far from having been realized. Workmen have not been flocking to the banking counters unsolicited. Instead, the greater part of the insurance written has been obtained through "pressure" exercised upon employees by manufacturing firms.

Technically, the law prohibits employment of solicitors to visit the workmen. But it was not long before there was practical approximation to old-time methods. For the law provides that the "trustees may, in their discretion, establish such means for the receipt of applications for insurance, and of deposits and of premiums and annuity payments, at such convenient places and times, of such nature and upon such terms as the bank commissioner and the insurance commissioner may approve." The *modus operandi* was at first for manufacturers employing large numbers of men to give authority to representatives of the savings bank to interview their employees—the latter being given to understand, by officers of the firm itself, that an application will be viewed with favour by the "powers that be." Later, however, the manufacturers went so far as to engage former industrial agents to take charge of the work of persuading employees to apply for insurance.

The bank which has thus far transacted the greater volume of business is the Whitman Savings Bank, in the town of that name. It was through the influence of the shoe manufacturing interests in that place, that the trustees of the bank established an insurance department. The \$20,000 guarantee fund and \$5,000 expense fund, required under the law, were provided by the shoe manufacturers—so that really the bank itself was the agent rather than the principal in the matter. Between August 27, and December 16, 539 policies for about \$200,000 insurance were issued.

For a beginning, this amount is not inconsiderable; but it is to be noted that almost the whole of it resulted from soliciting—every whit as active and rather more forceful, than that of industrial insurance companies. Quite possibly the plan may continue; but its growth is conditioned upon the extent to which manufacturers and other large employers of labour are willing to back and push the scheme. As an attempt at eliminating expense in new business getting the experiment has failed completely. While there may be but little drain upon the expense fund held by the bank itself, it still

costs time and money to obtain applications. That certain employers are willing to contribute to this end, results in an apparent shifting of the expense from the premium-payers; but in no sense does away with it. And, in the long run, these very contributions will in large measure be paid by employees themselves—since future wage adjustments will indirectly tend to take into account all such disbursements.

Were this the only attempt to do away with the agent in life insurance, its failure might not prove his indispensability. But to this instance are to be added: the experience of a stagnant Post Office insurance business in Great Britain, a solid but stolid and stationary old Equitable Society, Miles Merander Dawson's moribund Fellowship of Solidarity, and Canada's unavailed-of Civil Service insurance privileges—not to mention one or more Life Insurance Clubs which swept the United States field by volleys and salvos of printed matter, but provided no agency infantry to support the printers' artillery. The government insurance department of New Zealand—which, under the indefatigable management of Mr. Morris Fox makes more stir than is usual with state undertakings—frankly recognizes the necessity of a field force. And in consequence incurs expense items that bear a strong family resemblance to those of ordinary insurance companies.

Within the past few weeks the Dominion Government has been introducing its Old Age Annuities scheme to the public, by means of an itinerant lecturer. Also Mr. S. T. Bastedo—who has supervision of the plan—has issued tables of rates prepared by Mr. M. D. Grant, F.I.A., the government actuary. It will be interesting to note to what extent occasional platform lectures and the scattering of rate manuals will require to be supplemented by more personal canvass if the Government scheme is to attain to important proportions.



#### MONTREAL'S FIRE-FIGHTING IN 1908.

While fire losses throughout Canada were much heavier in 1908 than in 1907, those in Montreal were lighter—though more numerous. The Civic Fire Alarm Department's report shows the following comparison:

	1908.	1907.
Fires.....	1,053	984
Alarms (no fires).....	418	457
False alarms.....	139	205
Automatic alarms.....	73	82
False alarms by 'phone.....	6	11

Nine fatalities due to fire occurred during the past year—all of them strangely enough at fires of otherwise minor seriousness.

During the year the brigade used 1,005 streams and 1,251 hand extinguishers, and 101 small fires were put out with buckets of water. Steam engines were used at 23 fires, and chemical engines at 9. The water towers were not used once during the twelve months.