

would be a great factor in the spread of the society. We may not, it is true, get a large number of members in some districts, as, perhaps, our eligible Catholics may already be members of some other friendly society, but, nevertheless, I contend that it is imperative that we should establish branches in those cases, as the longer we delay, the more difficult it will be to overcome the trouble. We must, therefore, make provision for the rising generation and the men of the future.

Touching on the subject of founding new branches brings to my mind another phase of the question, and it is this: While I advocate the pushing of new business I do not want it to be done at the expense of existing branches. What I mean is this: At the present time, once a branch has been established, no system is in vogue to keep in touch with it. Several of these branches are pining for lack of assistance and encouragement, and some steps should be taken to encourage them. They should be regularly visited and corresponded with, and one means of doing this is very simple. I would suggest that a monthly budget or bulletin be published in the *N.Z. Tablet*, say a page, which would be devoted to items of interest to Hibernians. Arrangements could be made to print 200 or 300 copies, and these could be sent to members, with a covering letter requesting branch secretaries to read the contents to the meetings, and invite discussion thereon. I think this would be an excellent means of getting members interested, and of inducing them to take a lively interest in the work of the society. The publication could contain short instructions or explanations of points continually cropping up. Every branch should be visited by the district officers, or some arrangements made so that an official visit is made at least annually by some one appointed on their behalf. Such visits, I am quite sure, would do an immense amount of good in galvanizing inactive branches into action, and in stirring the active branches to further effort. In this connection, perhaps, the district deputies may prove of some use. A very much antiquated rule in our society has reference to the holding of triennial meetings. The time is now opportune to discuss this matter. Meetings should be held annually in some central place. Half-yearly meetings should be abolished. One of the arguments used against the substitution of annual for triennial meetings is that of expense. This can be overcome by cutting down the representation. The suggestion made in Bro. Flynn's unity scheme that the representation be on a diocesan basis will be a factor in reducing expense, and could very well be considered in discussing this matter. There is to my mind much to be said in favor of annual meetings. At the present time practically anything worth doing is held over for the triennial meeting, and if that meeting does not come to an agreement over the matter, it is postponed for another three years, and so on. At annual meetings the business of the society is kept under review constantly, and if an agreement is not come to, instead of waiting another three years, the matter is again reviewed in twelve months' time. If this were done more business would be done in branches, and members would have an opportunity of making suggestions for the betterment of the society, knowing full well that the suggestions would be dealt with by a thoroughly representative body in twelve months' time at the latest, instead of being debated by a meeting of proxies without any action being taken. I contend that if we are

to progress as we should, we must have our representative meetings annually. The district supplementary sick fund is another matter which is causing many branches much concern. It is a matter which was pushed through at the Napier meeting without the delegates or even the committee, to whom it was relegated, thoroughly understanding it. Of course, I do not know what prompted the executive in the action they took in placing that rule on the book, but as it stands, I consider it most inequitable. Branches are asked to contribute a levy of 1s 6d per quarter per member to the funeral fund. This levy of 1s 6d provides for the liability of £30 per member. Now branches are asked to contribute 1s 1d per member per quarter for a district supplementary sick fund. This means that the district executive is providing the sum of £23 for every member in the society in the district supplementary sick fund. This amount is being provided in addition to the sick fund held by branches. Branches do not object to the principle of a district supplementary sick fund, but to the high levy which they are called upon to contribute. If the district consider that they have fixed the levy as low as possible, I consider the sooner the whole of the sick fund is consolidated the better.

Another matter which would be a boon to the society would be the creation of an old-age, out-of-work, and sickness contribution fund—a fund that would enable branches to keep good on the books, and pay the contributions of those members who are sick, out of work, or who have reached a certain age. In suggesting such a fund I do not advocate that an additional contribution be exacted from members, but simply to see if the district can not manage to create a fund similar to that they are creating for members who have joined the Expeditionary Force.

The position of district deputy is one, if worth anything at all, that should be placed upon a satisfactory footing. Personally, I see no reason why the district deputies should not have a seat on the district executive. At the present time it is but an empty title.

In conclusion, I must congratulate the district executive on the way in which the investments and funds have been managed, but, whilst congratulating them on this, I must point out that, although it is essential to have our funds properly managed and invested, we do not want to concentrate our energies on that and that alone. Our aims and objects should be to increase our membership, so that our ranks will contain every eligible Catholic in New Zealand; but I am afraid when we compare the membership of our society with our eligible Catholic population, we have a long way to go before accomplishing that object. An effort should be made, and if it is persistently and energetically done, we will not be far off the mark, when later on we review the position. In this connection I think it only right that there should be some recognition by the district of the work of those members who endeavor to increase the membership. Such recognition, in the form of a gold medal, or framed certificate, would act as a stimulus to further the interests of our society.

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