

what has been stated by Mr. Mills at the annual meeting—either the last or the previous one—that it was the intention of the company eventually to retire from the management.

70. You have no resolution from the company itself, or from any of its prominent officers, to this effect?—No.

71. You have nothing official to go upon?—No written communication.

72. *Hon. Major Steward.*] I would draw your attention to Rule 22, at present in force, which reads as follows: “Members in general meeting may, with the consent of the company, alter these rules, or the mode in which the benefits of the society may be applied, but shall have no power to apply such benefits to persons other than members; always provided that no motion to alter the rules shall be received at any meeting unless the committee shall have received, at least one month before the date of meeting, notice in writing from the member proposing such motion of his intention so to do.” Now, therefore, Rule 23, in accordance with Rule 22, cannot be altered without a month’s notice beforehand of the intention so to do; and an alteration cannot be carried into effect unless a motion were carried at the meeting so called?—No, practically not.

73. Then, of its own motion the Union Company cannot, without the consent of the society, by a majority expressed, carry out the intention stated by Mr. McLean?—That is so.

74. *Mr. Fisher.*] It would be useless to ask you how a statement of this kind gets into print and embodied in a leading article?—Of course, it is useless to ask me. I cannot answer for the newspapers.

75. *The Chairman.*] Can you tell us if you know how many men have been rejected from membership from being physically unfit or predisposed to disease?—I have no record, but the percentage is very, very small, and would not exceed 1 per cent. of the men passing through.

76. Do you think that the medical officers of the society examine the men with the carefulness that would be given to, say, persons intending to take up policies in a life insurance office?—I do not think that in the case of benefit societies they examine with the same care that they do in the case of life insurance. I fancy they make a perfunctory examination.

77. Do you think it would be possible for you to supply us with the proportion of men rejected from the society for such reasons? Have you any record from which you could get the information?—I hardly think so, but I am confident I am right in saying it does not exceed 1 per cent.

78. You were saying that since the Conciliation Board made certain arrangements matters were on a different footing from what they were before?—In this respect: that pursers have been instructed to enrol only men who desire to join.

79. These pursers of the company are never told to give employment to the men?—Oh, no; the pursers have nothing whatever to do with the employing of men. They act as my agents on the boats for enrolling members, and my instructions to them have been to enrol only men who desired to join.

80. Then, it seems to me that since the Conciliation Board, in March, gave this judgment your opinion is that it has rendered unnecessary the position which the Hon. Mr. McLean says is to be taken up in September?—No; that is in connection with the present members. The agreement is that it should be optional with new men joining as from date and present members continuing as from the 30th September next.

81. It means that if men, being now members, should after the 30th September wish to relinquish their membership they would not have any pressure put upon them by the society to continue as members?—That is the answer.

82. Your opinion, then, is that the Conciliation Act has helped to prevent friction between the men and their employers?—In this respect I do.

83. And, consequently, in preventing friction it may help very considerably to prevent any future strike?—Oh, yes, I think it should.

84. Now, I merely ask for your opinion: do you think there is any connection between the company losing its hold on the society, as it promises to do, and the fact that strikes are not so likely to be in the future as in the past?—I hardly think so, especially as the Union Company had previously expressed its intention of leaving the society to the men eventually.

85. They are going to leave the society to the men; but we were told yesterday by Mr. McEwan that the society was one which would not be registered—at all events, in its present form—because the Registrar of Friendly Societies considered it was on an unsound basis. He said that the surrender value, for instance, was a thing which the Registrar would not accept. Do you think that the Union Company recognises that the society is on an unsound basis at present?—In what way?

86. A member of the committee says that the Registrar of Friendly Societies regards it as unsound, and would not register it because it is on a false actuarial basis—that is to say, he thinks the society is not able to pay the surrender value and continue its benefits?—In the first place, I understand that the Registrar, or, rather, the Revising Barrister, of Friendly Societies has no say whatever in regulating the contributions and benefits of friendly societies—none whatever.

87. It is an actuarial question?—Exactly. The Registrar, or Revising Barrister, has no power to interfere with the contributions fixed by any society, or the benefits promised to be paid.

88. *Mr. Fisher.*] Have the accounts of the society and the general affairs of the society been investigated by an actuary?—They are in process of investigation at present. The report is not yet to hand, owing to the illness of the actuary for some time past.

89. Who is that actuary?—Mr. Leslie, who is regarded as one of the best and most competent actuaries, so far as friendly society business is concerned, in the colony.

90. Do you not think this investigation has been a long time under way? To my knowledge, Mr. Leslie has not been ill for twelve months?—He has not been ill for twelve months, or anything like it. In the first place, it takes a long time to supply Mr. Leslie with the information necessary.

91. Well, listen to this: At the meeting held on the 5th December, 1896, Mr. Mills said: “What course this will take will depend largely upon the actuarial report on the state of the