

coercion at that time, and consequently there was a mistake in Coleman's evidence. Another witness (I forget who) stated that all the officers—president, treasurer, and secretary—were in the service of the Union Company. That is not so. The secretary is entirely the servant of the society. His position was advertised for, and he got the post. He has nothing whatever to do with the Union Company—nothing in the least.

169. *Mr. Fisher.*] That is one?—He is the only one. The president is Mr. Mills and the treasurer myself.

170. Who are the seven who compose the Union Company's representatives on the committee?—They are all employes of the company. There are six, exclusive of the president, who is *ex officio* a member, and who has never attended the committee meetings since the initiation of the society.

171. We had it distinctly that two or three were wharf-labourers, but for the matter of information it would be better if you would tell us who the whole six are?—There is the marine superintendent, once Captain Cameron but now Captain Strang. He is the vice-president, and when present occupies the chair. I am the treasurer. Then there are Mr. McInnes, who is one of our leading engineers at Port Chalmers; Mr. Mathieson, who is our wharfinger at Dunedin; and two wharf-lumpers at Dunedin (McDonald and Seymour). I just wish to mention, while on this, that it is very rarely—I think I may say never—that the whole six members are there on the committee. Very often I am away. It often happens that the marine superintendent is away. Mr. McInnes is at times not able to attend, and Mr. Mathieson is not always able to attend. I think it very often happens that only two or three members of the committee are present.

172. *The Chairman.*] That is at ordinary meetings, but in any great question they would all be there?—Up to the present time I am glad to say we have never had any great question, and everything has worked amicably.

173. You think that winding up the society is a big thing?—Yes; but, referring to Mr. Fisher's statement, I do not think there is any likelihood of a dispute. In reference to winding up the society, I think it would be wound up without any trouble whatever. The funds, of course, would be distributed amongst its members.

174. Do you think it quite fair that the funds should be distributed entirely amongst those members who at the time are in a financial position?—Yes; because previous members have had their surrender value, which is declared by the actuary to be a fair thing. The committee has nothing to do with the surrender value. I would like you to understand that thoroughly.

175. But as to the distribution of the funds in the event of the dissolution of the society, all opinion of that can be nothing more than speculative, because the accumulated funds are invested in the bank in the names of Mr. Mills and Mr. McLean as trustees. Of course, we and you know that should serious difficulty arise between the shipowners and their employes it would be difficult for the men to get the money, if they wished to dissolve the society, seeing it is in the names of Mr. Mills and Mr. McLean?—Well, that is a purely hypothetical position. I have never heard or seen any reason to believe that the Union Company would ever dream of taking these funds.

176. I am not suggesting they would take the funds: they might simply insist that they should remain in the bank?—I do not think so.

177. You know there is nothing to compel them to give up the funds?—As things are there are to be no more labour disputes, happily.

178. You think highly of the Conciliation Act?—Yes, I do—very highly. It is a pity it was not established all over the world.

179. Will you go on with your statement?—I noticed about these funds mentioned yesterday. I want it to be clearly understood that so far as I am aware there can be no difficulty at all in distribution if the men say there is to be a dissolution. I think Rule 77 deals with that. That has always been the intention of the company so far as I am aware. We cannot wind up the society without five-sixths of the whole members being there and voting. They can vote by proxy. As to the initiation of the society, I see it was mentioned by one witness that it actually proceeded from the men themselves. I think it was Mr. McEwan.

180. You do not agree with that?—Well, it originated with one P. McDonald, who was a sailor on the "Manapouri." That was about the beginning of 1891. Of course, I cannot say for certain as to the time. It was probably some time in January, 1891. He suggested to Mr. Kirby, who is brought into closer relation with the men than probably any other official, that it would be a good thing to start some sort of a society, and the question was asked him as to the sort of a society. He said a benefit society, and the matter was taken up at the moment and carried to Captain Cameron, and presumably from him to Mr. Mills. That was really the foundation of the society. It got talked about, and eventually some rules were framed, and the society is the result.

181. And you think, Mr. Ness, that the Union Company fell in with this entirely on account of their good feeling towards the men, and with a wish to help them?—I think so. I should imagine the Union Company had no thought of it until this was brought before them by the idea of this man McDonald.

182. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Then, a previous witness was quite correct in saying that the movement had originated with the men?—Yes.

183. *The Chairman.*] Is McDonald still living?—Yes; I think he is working with the Northern Company. Among the earlier members of the committee appointed by the Union Company were Messrs. Whitson, William, Cook, and Kirby. It was thought at that time that the men rather resented these officials being there—that they could not have freedom of speech, or that members would not like to speak freely—one can understand the feeling of the men—so at the meeting in November, 1893, these four were removed from the committee, and their places were taken by the four whose names I have just given you. Captain Cameron and myself were the only two of the old members who remained. With reference to that unfortunate letter which we have heard so much about, *re* Dorling and the "Grafton"—