

184. We went into that very fully with the secretary?—He would inform you that this man Dorling had always returned himself as a member of no society. In the master's report to the marine superintendent the same thing appears—that Dorling was always returned as a non-member; so that under the circumstances there was some slight ground of excuse for the letter, although the secretary had no authority, and never had any, to write such a letter. The first thing I knew of it was when I read it in the paper.

185. You never heard any explanation as to why the man concealed the fact?—No. So far as I know, there was no reason. There were many men at the time—when I say many I forget what the percentage was—who were already in other societies, and they did not join our society. I mention this to prove that no difference has ever been made with this man. There is one man now—Otto—who is a lamp-trimmer in the "Tarawera." He was at that time a sailor on board the "Tarawera," and he did not join because he was in some other society. He is still in the ship, and has been ever since. I think he was your second witness. A lamp-trimmer on the "Waihora" is in the same position. Numbers of men were members of other societies, and they have remained in the service without the slightest difference being made; in fact, it was always a point with me to urge men not to join our society unless they actually wanted to belong to two societies. At this late stage it is hard to remember all the names of the men, but I know that the matter came before me very often. They would come and ask me if I thought they should join, and I strongly urged them not to. In reference to that, I may mention two men who came from Sydney, I think they had been working in one of the ships over there—probably the "Oonah." They asked here to get into one of the boats of the Union Company, and informed Mr. Kirby they were unfinancial members of the Foresters, or some other society. They had been asked if they were members of another society, and their reply was as I have stated. They asked to be allowed to join the Union Company's society, but they were told "No; they must make themselves financial in their own society"; and to avoid any clashing of interest the men did that. They are now on board one of the coasting-boats. They were not made members of our society.

186. Well, what is the next point?—I see that one or two witnesses laid somewhat similar stress on the fact that the men's delegates did not represent the men properly. Well, I do not see how they can say such a thing as that, for the representatives are elected by the majority of votes, and the men themselves have perfect freedom of speech and every liberty in committee. I thought they very fairly represented the men of the fleet.

187. *Hon. Major Steward.*] I think you misapprehend the witness. I think I know the witness you refer to. The impression the witness gave me was this: that he did not mean that the men elected did not properly represent the men, but that in proportion to the amount of contributions as between the men and the company the men were entitled to a larger extent of representation?—I saw that part too.

188. *The Chairman.*] And they were also questioned on the point whether they considered it was possible for the men who were employes of the Union Company to go far, supposing their views were in opposition to any wish the company might have expressed. You see, freedom of debate there might mean speaking against their own bread and butter?—Yes.

189. Well, of course, there is no doubt that the men are not coerced in any way; but would there not naturally be that sort of feeling—that they are not exactly as free as representatives of ordinary friendly societies in debating business?—It always struck me that the men seemed rather pleased than otherwise that there should be some sort of helping hand held out to them by the company to carry on the business of the society, because a society of that sort is a tremendous affair, and requires a lot of management from business-men. The men themselves are here only once a fortnight or month, as the case might be, according to the arrival of their ship, and they really want assistance in carrying on the business. During the whole time I have been connected with the society—since it was started—there has always been the best of good feeling. In fact, the company's nominees were a sort of dead-letter, for I have often gone to a meeting and sat all the time without opening my mouth, except in the matter of formal business, as treasurer; so that they have actually carried on the business themselves.

190. Especially lately?—I noticed Mr. Randle mentioned eight months. I cannot make out how he got that eight months, because ever since the society has been established the men have had great freedom in managing the business. I want to make it quite clear that the Union Company's nominees have never kept the men from expressing themselves; in fact, the men have been very free in all cases. There was some reference made *in re* the deposit and current accounts. I think it was Mr. McEwan who thought the current account was in the names of the trustees; that is a mistake. The current account is in the name of the society in Port Chalmers, and all cheques are signed by the treasurer and secretary. Of course, you know the deposits are in the names of the trustees, but they have nothing whatever to do with the current account. I am not quite sure, but I fancy something was said about the fact of Mr. Grater having been "sacked" for writing that letter.

191. *Mr. Fisher.*] So it was stated by Mr. McEwan?—That is hardly correct. The fact is that for some time past there has been the feeling that Mr. Grater does not devote so much attention to the society as he should. He is an excellent man so far as his technical work goes, but he is not in the habit of visiting the ships, and so he is virtually as big a stranger to the members of the society as he was when he first joined as secretary. That, combined with the feeling about the letter, led up to his being asked to resign. There is no question of his getting "sacked" for that particular item. Of course, I know he was severely sat upon by the company, because he has no right to interfere with the company's business. He had no power whatever to order the discharge of any man in the service, and that is one thing about which I have always been careful in my position on the committee—to avoid any friction between the Union Company and the committee.