

He was going beyond his duties altogether in ordering a man to be discharged. I see that at the 1st April we had ninety-four men in the deck and engine departments who are over forty years of age. Of these, sixty-two belong to the society, eleven to other societies, and twenty-one are not members of any society: that is out of a total in this department of 620. This goes to show that the men over forty are not cast out of the company's service as useless. Many of our best men are over forty years of age.

192. *The Chairman.*] Members have been admitted to the society over thirty-eight years of age?—There is no hard-and-fast rule in reference to that. It is an understood thing that men should not be over forty years. That is acting on the example of other societies. Of course, it would not be fair to the society as a whole that elderly men should be taken in. About the men who have been kept ashore from their boats to give evidence, I have to say that the society have no word that they would be expected to pay these men's wages. Their expenses ashore, presumably, will be paid by the company. The funds of the society would not be trencched upon for that.

193. That was the opinion of Mr. Bracegirdle. He is not a member of the committee, but he volunteered?—I saw the statement, but I think he is speaking without authority; in fact, the men have simply asked to come ashore, and the company raised no question, and they expect to get their pay in the usual way.

194. *Mr. Fisher.*] Bracegirdle says he stayed back from the ship to give evidence here, and further says, "I take it the society will pay my board and the company my wages"?—I do not see any distinction between the two. I do not know why he should have made that statement. I do not think for one minute the society will be asked to pay these men.

195. The annual report says the number of men in the society is 860?—Yes.

196. Can you tell me how many men are in the fleet?—I think, between a thousand and eleven hundred.

197. *The Chairman.*] That includes captains and officers?—No; only seamen, firemen, cooks, and stewards.

198. *Mr. Fisher.*] That would mean that there are about three hundred men in the fleet who do not belong to the society, and therefore presumably to other societies?—Yes; and a few belong to no society. I think when the society was first started I worked the matter out, and found we had a percentage of 8, speaking roughly, who belonged to no society. It is quite infinitesimal. This would go to prove the necessity of some such society being established, and I might say from the length of time the society has been established I do not think I have ever heard a bad word against it from any man, more especially, of course, from men who have had benefit. They have praised the committee very much.

199. *The Chairman.*] But would they be likely to go to you—a leading official of the company—to grumble?—I refer now to talking in a private manner with the men. Speaking generally, I am on very good terms with the men. I am not in a position that I have to exercise any authority over them. That is left to others. I always considered myself to be on good terms with the men, and I have had many conversations with them. I suppose I will have the privilege of coming up again if I see anything in the evidence I might wish to speak about.

*The Chairman:* Certainly.

ANGUS McINNES was examined on oath.

200. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—An engineer.

201. In what ship?—In no ship. I am engineer foreman at Port Chalmers, under Mr. Cook.

202. Are you a member of the committee of this benefit society?—Yes.

203. How long have you been in the service of the Union Company?—About thirty years; in fact, before the company started. I have been in the Union Company's service since its formation.

204. How long have you been in the benefit society?—About four years.

205. Will you tell us anything you would like to say?—I may say I think it is pretty fair evidence that has been given, so far as I can understand. I have been appointed by the company. Of course, I cannot always be at their meetings.

206. *Mr. Fisher.*] You think the evidence, so far as it has been given, very fair all through?—Yes; and I may say, so far as I am concerned, I employ a good deal of labour, particularly among the firemen, and when a boat is laid up we never inquire if the men belong to the benefit society or not. When a boat is undergoing repairs I give preference to the men employed on board. The men employed belong to Port Chalmers, and I think only one or two belong to the society.

207. *The Chairman.*] They are not so particular about shore hands as about ship hands?—No; in fact, we do not ask them whether they belong to any society or to the Union Company's society. I take the best men for the work, irrespective of country, denomination, or anything else.

208. *Mr. Fisher.*] At your committee meetings is there every freedom of discussion amongst members of the committee?—I find at all the meetings I attend very little trouble with anything. The men seem to get on very well together.

209. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Have you formed any opinion as to the expediency or otherwise of bringing this society under the operation of the Friendly Societies Act?—I would prefer it to remain as it is.

210. *The Chairman.*] Why?—For one thing, if you belong to a friendly society you get no surrender value on leaving the society.

211. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Suppose the rules as you have them now were legalised, it would not affect you injuriously?—So far as I am concerned, I think they should remain as they are.

212. *The Chairman.*] Is it not a fact that your surrender values are being paid on a false basis—that is, if the contributions are not sufficient to meet the values it cannot be very safe, and the