

*Witness* : Yes.

*Mr. Fisher* : You see, you being content with your employment in the Union Company, and being content also with the regulations framed under this benefit society, are therefore at no time during your connection with the Union Company likely to test the validity of these regulations ; but suppose, on the other hand, you wished, in a Court of law, to contest these rules you would find you had no status whatever. What I said referred purely as to the legal status. Of course, in your case I can readily see that the question of legal status would never arise. But for the purposes of contrast you must take the case of a man who might not accept the dictum of the directors and the society, and you might wish to contest the matter. In such a case that man would find himself out in the cold. I put this to you merely by way of explanation. Of course, you have faith in the company and its directors, and no question of rules is likely to arise in your case.

*Witness* : But we can deal with the rules themselves ; we can alter them as we like.

70. *Mr. Fisher* : You see, there are accumulated funds to the extent of £4,300 belonging to the benefit society, and these are funds subscribed by the men themselves and invested in the bank in the names of George McLean and James Mills as trustees. Well, suppose any difficulty should arise between the men of the fleet and the directors of the Union Company, who has the “ whip-hand ” of these funds?—Well, you would like to point out to me that the trustees have ; but is there no system at law by which we could approach these funds?

*Mr. Fisher* : None whatever.

*Witness* : Not as a mutual benefit society?

*Mr. Fisher* : No, because you are not registered.

*Witness* : That is the only thing registration would do for us. It is a thing we never look forward to.

JOSE DA COSTA was examined on oath.

71. *The Chairman*.] What are you?—A sailmaker in the Union Company's sail-loft.

72. Have you seen the evidence that has been taken already in regard to this inquiry?—I have read a little of it.

73. Have you got anything to say in addition to the evidence that has been tendered, or do you wish to refute anything you have read?—I have read every part of the evidence, but have taken no particular notice of it. The only thing I saw that I thought was a mistake was Mr. Davies's evidence as to the contribution for the quarter being 9s. 6d.

74. That mistake has been cleared up. Have you anything you would like to tell us?—The only thing I have to say is that some three and a half years ago Mr. Ness sent one of his clerks to ask all of us who were working if we belonged to any benefit society. I, for one, said I did, and they asked me if I would like to join theirs. I said No, because I already belonged to one, and thought it quite sufficient.

75. What society do you belong to?—To the Foresters. That was all that passed between us, and there has been nothing more since that day.

76. Did they never come to you to see if you kept up your payments?—No.

77. You are employed by the Union Company still, notwithstanding this?—Yes ; we have always had our share of work.

78. How long ago was this?—I cannot remember. Of course, you must remember the society was started amongst the seamen, and was brought to the shoremen afterwards.

ROBERT ROBERTSON was examined on oath.

79. *The Chairman*.] What is your business?—I am a sailmaker ashore.

80. How long have you been in the Union Company's service?—For the past fifteen years.

81. Are you a member of the benefit society?—I am.

82. How long have you been in the society?—Between three and four years—over three years.

83. Have you seen the evidence as printed in the newspapers?—Yes ; I have read some of it.

84. Is there anything you wish to tell us, in addition, or is there anything you wish to rebut?—Nothing at all. I cannot speak about seafaring men at all. I do not come into contact with them. I have not seen anything I can speak about.

85. Is the evidence, so far as you have read it, a fair representation generally?—So far as I know, yes. I know there was no compulsion as regards me joining.

86. Are you a member of another society?—I am not.

MATTHEW CREE was examined on oath.

87. *The Chairman*.] What are you?—A seaman on board the “ Te Anau.”

88. How long have you been in the Union Company's service?—About six years and a half.

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

90. How long have you been in the society?—Since about a month after its formation in 1891.

91. Have you seen the evidence as printed in the newspapers?—Yes.

92. Is there anything you would like to add to that evidence, or any of it you wish to rebut?—Well, there is one item I would like to refute. I have been on the committee since February, 1893. I have seen in the statements of one or two witnesses—they did not exactly say point-blank that the men's representatives were afraid to speak their minds, but as much as hinted in that direction. Well, ever since I have been on that committee, when anything came forward for the benefit of the men, I was not afraid to speak my mind.

93. Are you one of the men's representatives?—I am. I also see it mentioned that the Union Company's nominees on the committee would dominate the men's because they have seven votes to six. I would like to point out that since I have been on the committee the case of the