

was no occasion for any then member of any other society to become a member of our society, and that they would get the same chance of employment, and seeing too that I give the men employment, I am in a position to assure you, gentlemen, that I have never yet told a man that if he did not become a member of the Union Company's society he would not get employment, providing he was a non-member of any other society.

38. You see it will become our duty to weigh this evidence to the best of our ability. Now, we have this statement: that you have always acted on your best conception of what was in the interest of the men in the company. Then, we have put before us Rule 5, which has words to this effect: "Provided he or she is not a member of any union which the company will not recognise." It is true that those words are not in the present edition, but they were in a former edition—1891—and you will see how this addendum to the rule clashes with your statement this morning on oath?—I have never referred to a union. I have referred to any recognised benefit society. The union is not a benefit society. There are no benefits at all in connection with it. I have never known of any.

39. *The Chairman.*] You have never known of any union that has any benefits?—Not this particular union here. There may have been such a case as this: A man got sick, and the hat went round for help. I would just like to reply to Mr. Fisher's question. To prove what I say I will show you that when the society was first inaugurated there were only sixty-six members of other societies in the service, and now we have, in 1897, no less than eighty-six such men, or an increase of twenty. If we clashed with other societies, or gave our own men preference over other society men, there would be a decrease instead of an increase.

40. *Mr. Fisher.*] What is the object of the rule in the company's service which prevents a captain, if he chooses, or a chief engineer, if he chooses, from engaging any man or hand?—I do not know the reason why the company adopted the scheme if it was not for the purpose of having the right to employ whom they thought fit. Prior to the strike of 1890 the men were employed by the masters and engineers, and the men gave the company a lot of trouble. I am not going to refer to the strike business. If a man was discharged in this port for drunkenness or for abusive conduct to the officers under whom he worked there was nothing to prevent that man from going to Lyttelton and getting into one of the company's ships there, and so on. The discipline was not so good owing to that. Any one connected with the ships will tell you that the discipline is now much better than it was formerly, owing to the company themselves having a say in the employment of the men. That is one of the principal reasons why the Union Company instituted this new scheme which came into force shortly after 1890—that is, instead of masters and engineers employing their own people it is done partly by me and partly by the branch managers at the various ports throughout the colony.

41. *Hon. Major Steward.*] I want to clear up a point. Do you, as a matter of fact, engage all the employes of the company?—No. All the firemen at the Port of Dunedin, and all the seamen at the Port of Dunedin are engaged and discharged by me.

42. Then, there are some other officers occupying positions somewhat equivalent to your own at other ports?—No. It is done by the branch managers at the other ports.

43. Now, is this a possible explanation of the discrepancy in evidence, the discrepancy being that you positively assert, I believe, that you have never made the fact of a man not being a member of your benefit society, always supposing him to be a member of another society, a disqualification to his appointment in the service, whereas other persons have sworn before us that they have been put in that position? Now, is a possible explanation of that discrepancy to be found in the answer you have just given—that there are other persons who engage men in the Union Company's service?—No; I do not think so. My reason for thinking so is that the employment of men at other ports goes through the branch managers, and I think they are sufficiently conversant with the rules of the society to know that a man, although a member of another society, is to get the same chance as a member of our own society.

44. Can you answer positively, of your own knowledge, that they have also adhered to that?—I have never heard anything to the contrary.

45. Are any men ever engaged by the pursers?—No. The rule is that if the ship was at Wellington, and a fireman leaves her, to ask Captain Post, who is acting as wharfinger there, if he has a fireman on his books.

46. *Mr. Fisher.*] That is only in case of an exceptional vacancy in any of the ships?—Exceptional vacancies occurring on ships belonging to head-quarters. They have instructions that all changes must be made at Dunedin, but there are ships trading out of Wellington which do not come to Dunedin, and they do all their changing at Wellington, on the same principle as the changes are made at Dunedin.

47. Then, it follows that, except in the case of exceptional vacancies, men wishing to get employment in the Union Company must come to Dunedin?—No. A man goes to a branch manager at the port where the ship is. Suppose he is at Auckland, he would go to Mr. Henderson.

48. *Hon. Major Steward.*] You referred to the possibility of this impression having got into the minds of these witnesses by the action of some of the pursers: do you mean in connection with the men being called upon for their instalment to the benefit society when receiving their wages?—That is the only conclusion I can come to. When the secretary finds a man on the ship not a member of the society he reports him to me. I may tell you that all the men who belong to the deck and engine departments have to be recommended by the departments they are in, the reason being to insure that we shall get a good class of men into the service. We keep the men on probation for two months before accepting them as members. The purser would be instructed by the secretary to enrol a man, provided he was under forty years of age, and not a member of another society. The purser, in exceptional cases, may forget to ask a man if he belongs to another society.