

man named Thomas Scott came to me on the wharf, and said, "I have seen Colman's evidence in the papers, and it is not true. I was on the ship at the time, and heard what you and Mr. Ness said—that men who were members of other societies need not join." I asked him if he would put that statement in writing, and he said he would. It is as follows: "Dunedin, 21st May, 1897.—I, Thomas Scott, declare that I was a member of the 'Tarawera's' crew about May, 1891. We were called together by Messrs. Ness and Kirby in regard to forming the society. They stated that any man that belonged to any other society would not be asked to join, but would have the same chance of work as those who joined the company's society. There was no threat or compulsion in any shape or form. William Colman was a member of the ship's crew at the time.—THOMAS SCOTT, late greaser, s.s. 'Tarawera.'—To Mr. Kirby, Shipping Officer, Union Steamship Company, Dunedin." If you wish to call Scott to give evidence, he will appear.

96. Colman said in his evidence that when Mr. Ness and Mr. Kirby told him he had better join the society he thought, "Well, it will only be another 5s., and it will be another £1 per week if I am sick." He looked on it just as if he was putting the money in the bank. That has a very different complexion to what is in the letter?—Yes. He joined of his own free-will. He was distinctly told that he need not join if he belonged to another society.

*Hon. Major Steward*: He also says he told the company he did not wish to join, because he had been paying into the Oddfellows, but he was told that if he did not join the society he would not get a job. It was not a threat, but it was understood all the same.

97. *Mr. Fisher*.] Now, turn to Mr. Colman's evidence at another part. He says he was asked to join the Union Company's benefit society, but objected to join, but was overruled. This evidence is in direct conflict with that document. What is your answer to this statement he made on oath?—My answer is that that statement is not correct.

98. You will see the difficulty we have in revising this evidence, and the difficulty increases by reason of the fact that witnesses will come here and give evidence generally in favour of the Union Company and the benefit society up to a certain point, after which they intimate that they wish to say what they really think. Then they ask that the newspapers should not report what they have to say, and they give us a totally different version. For instance, one witness, after giving evidence generally in favour of the company and the benefit society, adds, "If I had a free hand I would speak differently." So you can appreciate the difficulty we shall have in dealing with this evidence?—Quite so. Of course, it shows that the statements of this man Scott, Mr. Ness, and myself in reference to Colman must be a little bit truthful. I say it is wholly truthful. Then, the man Atto was in the same ship, and he was a member of the Foresters; he was not compelled to join the society, and he is still in the ship, and still in the Foresters, and not a member of our society. If Colman's statement is correct, how does it fit in with Atto's case?

99. *Mr. Grater* tells us he is a member of the M.U.I.O.O.F., and that he prefers that that society should be registered, but he prefers that the Union Company's benefit society should not be registered. Can you reconcile those two statements?—The only way you can reconcile them is this: If the company's benefit society was registered the position of offices would be elective, and the Union Company would not then probably subscribe towards the funds of the society. Further, the Union Company would have nothing to say in the management and working of the society, where they have vested interests, as at the present time.

100. You need not answer this question unless you care to do so. Will you give us your opinion as to whether it is not cheaper—more economical—for the company to contribute 20 per cent. towards the benefit society funds than to meet their legal obligations under the Shipping and Seamen's Act?—Which they do. I know they have met their obligations under that Act, seeing that I discharge all men in the Customs myself. I always attend the Customhouse as a rule, and I assure you that both the 1877 and the 1890 Acts are always complied with.

101. I think we have had two witnesses to say that they became ill while in the Union Company's service, and received £1 a week from the benefit society, but no wages from the Union Company?—I should think the reason of that was that the witnesses were not in intercolonial ships. A home-trade ship is trading within the colony of New Zealand and on coastal articles. They are two different classes of ships.

102. Very well. My opinion, like your own, is a layman's opinion. Is it your opinion that if a man meets with an accident on an intercolonial ship he is entitled to wages?—No. He is entitled to wages if the injury has been done through the negligence of any of the ship's officers or any person whom he was working under at the time.

103. Can you give us any idea as to the amount paid by the company for injuries resulting from such accidents as you have alluded to?—I find from the Union Company's accountant that an average of £650 per annum is paid to men who have been injured on or about their ships. For instance, in 1894, £600 was paid; in 1895, £650; and in 1896, £700: an average of £650 per annum.

104. Would it be possible to obtain from you, or some other officer of the Union Company, a list of all the men injured, the nature of the injuries, the names of the men and the ships, and the amounts paid?—Yes; I take it you could get that from Mr. Whitson, secretary of the company.

105. *The Chairman*.] These amounts were paid by the Union Company and not by the society?—Yes, by the Union Company.

106. *Hon. Major Steward*.] So far as your experience goes, you wish us to understand that the company's contribution to the benefit society does not operate to prevent them from discharging their responsibilities under the Shipping and Seamen's Act?—No. The Customs authorities look after that, and before we pay a man off they see that the law is complied with.

107. And the fact that a man gets benefits from the benefit society is not allowed to operate against him by relieving the company of its obligations towards him?—You cannot do it. Every