put him on the "Waihora." The next I heard of him was that he had lost his passage at Melbourne. He was not on board when the steamer sailed—in fact, he had not been on board all day. He came back to Dunedin, and I spoke to him about his conduct. I said, "Cummock, you are getting an old man, and you will have to behave yourself better in the future." He said, "What about the society?" and I replied, "Oh, you ran out years ago. I cannot recommend you now." It was not then that he became unfinancial, as he said in his evidence, but nearly two years before. That is where the mistake rests in his evidence. He had fallen out of the society two years prior to the Melbourne affair. It was simply through kindness that the company took him back. In the case of Dorling, I suppose you have heard all that. I might show you these reports [Exhibit 5], which I received from the master of that ship from time to time. Dorling was always returned as a non-member of any society.

123. Is that shown on his own representation?—The pursers had instructions to ascertain from the men what society they belonged to, and to show it on the returns. Both the master's and the purser's reports are the same. The man concealed the fact that he was a member.

124. *Mr. Fisher.*] You are familiar with the terms of the new agreement with the Seamen's Union?—Yes; fairly. I glanced over it last evening for the first time.

125. Is it the intention of the company to withdraw altogether from the management of the benefit society?—I do not know if it is their intention to do so altogether, but from what I can learn they intend to give more power to the men. I do not know whether it is their intention to withdraw altogether, but I believe it is the intention of the company to give more say to the men in the management of the society's affairs.

126. I ask you that question because I want to call your attention to a statement contained in a leading article in the *Otago Daily Times* of the 13th May, 1897, which says, "The company has intimated its intention of doing at the end of September that which it has all along expressed its intention to do—retire from all participation in the management as soon as the society could go alone, and make it then a purely voluntary association like any other friendly society." Is that erroneous or not?—I do not think so. I have no reason to believe so. I think they will do so as soon as they find that the society is able to go alone.

127. At the end of September?—The paper says it believes the Union Company is going to do that.

128. It agrees as to the date of the agreement, but there is nothing in the agreement as to the intention of the company to retire from all participation in the management of the society?—I think Mr. Mills said something in regard to that when before the Conciliation Board.

129. There is a further question which might throw some light upon that: Are these rules to continue in force so far as you know?—I cannot say. I am not a member of the committee, and I do not know.

130. Cannot you give us your own impression or idea?—Part of the new rules would not fit in with the conciliation agreement—those, for instance, which make it still compulsory for men to become members of the society if they do not belong to another society. The agreement with the Seamen's Union says it will be optional on all persons joining now, and therefore that rule will, I presume, have to be struck out.

131. The rules as a whole, I take it, will remain in force with the exception of the compulsory clauses. If those rules remain in force, that statement must be erroneous, and it follows that the company will still take that share in the management which it takes under the rules. The two things are incompatible. It cannot be that these rules are to remain in force and that the company are to retire from all participation in the management of the society?—Quite so; it would be necessary to alter the wording of the rules before you can hand over the society to the men themselves.

132. It would be necessary, would it not, to give effect to this view, to expunge from these rules all appearance of control on the part of the company and its officers?—Quite so.

133. What authority has the newspaper for saying that?—I do not know what authority it has.

134. Possibly the authority may be inferential from the statement made by Mr. Mills at the annual meeting of the benefit society on the 5th December last, when he said: "A thoroughly competent actuary in Wellington is now going into the accounts, in order that he may advise the society and the committee how far it is in a thoroughly substantial position from a professional point of view. To look at the figures before us, we naturally conclude that the society is in a good position, and I think it is so; but we cannot say with certainty until the accounts are gone into by an experienced actuary. When his report comes up we shall then consider to what extent the company should render further assistance to the society." There was evidently an indication here that the company would probably have to revise the amount of its own contribution?—Quite so.

135. This statement in the Press and these rules cannot agree, can they, because so long as these rules have any force it follows that the Union Company will take a share in the management. I call attention to this point because the newspapers in their leading articles are saying a good deal about this Commission, and I want to prove by evidence given before the Commission that their statements are quite valueless. That statement is quite valueless?—Of course, I am not in a position to state.

THOMAS WILLIAM WHITSON was examined on oath.

136. *The Chairman.*] What is your rank in the Union Company's service?—I am secretary.

137. How long have you held that position?—About six or seven years.

138. Are you a member of the benefit society?—I am an honorary member.

139. Are you a member of the committee?—No; not now.

140. Have you seen the evidence as it has been reported in the newspapers?—Yes; I have looked through it from day to day.