

this sense: It is only new members joining the service, and who are not members of another society, who are compelled to join.

163. We understand that fully; we want an explanation of your statement that it only applied to new men joining the company's service. I have here a copy of the present rules, and in it is reprinted the preface to the original rules of June, 1891. At the bottom of the page the preface reads: "All present employes of the company, as defined in the rules, may, within three months, become members of the society without payment of an entrance-fee, on passing the necessary medical examination. It shall not, however, be compulsory for them to join the society, though all who join the company's service in future shall be required to do so, and pay an entrance-fee in accordance with the rules, within one month of their joining the company's service." That means those in the Union Company at that time were not compelled to join the society at all?—Certainly.

164. Then, these men must have been weeded out considerably, because the great bulk of the employes of the Union Company belong to the benefit society; therefore they must be new men?—Of course, it was stated that members of the society would have preference.

165. In fact, it really was compulsion to say, "If you want work from us, members who belong to our society shall have preference"?—If you like to call that compulsion. If two men apply for a vacancy, and one is a member of the society and the other is not, it is natural the company will give preference to the man who is a member of the society.

166. It is an indirect way of making a man join the society if he wants work?—He judges that for himself.

167. I want to call your attention to the fact that the term "compulsion" or "compulsory" is not invented by us?—Yes; you understand it is limited compulsion. If it is only spoken of by itself you might fancy it is applied to the whole service, whereas, as the rules distinctly state, men in the service were not compelled to join. But all new men had to join the society if they were not members of another friendly society. We were simply anxious that all men in the service should be members of some society, either our own or some other.

168. Well, that was compulsory?—In the future.

169. This is a matter of detail; but is it not a fact that the Union Company's benefit society was at one time affiliated with the registered friendly societies' dispensary?—For a time we got our medicines at the friendly societies' dispensary.

170. Why did your society withdraw?—Well, I cannot just say exactly, but I have an idea. It occurred some years ago. I think some of the registered societies took exception to an unregistered society getting its medicine from that dispensary. I think our society withdrew for some such reason as that. Then we made subsequent arrangements with our medical men, which I think were more favourable to the men in our society.

171. *The Chairman.*] The Union Company has the control to a very large extent of the shipping in these waters. What do you think would become of a man who was forty years old, and was not allowed to go to sea in any of your ships? Do you think it a perfectly fair or right regulation that men over thirty-eight for the stokehole and men over forty for the deck department should be debarred from joining the Union Company's service, because too old for the society? This is not in the rules, but was stated to be the case by Mr. Kirby. Give me your opinion?—I think it is quite right to have a limit of age in regard to men joining the service. We have the same for officers.

172. I do not mean any one who is beginning seafaring life—I mean a man who has been a sailor all his life, and at forty years of age cannot get more employment?—There are many men in the Union Company's service much over that age.

173. Did they enter earlier than that?—Oh, much depends upon the exigencies of the service. If we cannot get any men under forty years of age we have to take them over forty. We do not stick hard-and-fast to that rule; but, naturally, if a young man applied at the same time as an old man preference would be given the younger man.

174. A great deal has been said as to the registering or non-registering of the society: what, in your opinion, is the great objection to the society being a registered society?—We have no objection to the society being registered, but I understand that according to its present rules it could not be so registered. We have assisted it ever since its inception, and I understand that is a bar to registration; and, of course, the Union Company have several representatives on its committee, and that, I understand, is another bar. But, so far as registration goes, the Union Company would be quite glad to see some reasonable way by which it could be registered.

175. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Well, if special legislation were introduced to enable this society to be registered, with its rules as at present standing, would there be any objection to that?—If the society could be registered as it stands I do not think there could be any objection. There is no objection if there is no change in the constitution of the society, and if its present status can be retained.

176. On the other hand, would not registration be an advantage as putting the society in a stronger position before the law than it is at the present time?—It is really for the society to say, because I understand members recognise it would be a disadvantage because they think they would be deprived of privileges they now enjoy.

177. *The Chairman.*] Supposing a question arose as to the disposition of the funds or the maladministration of the funds, or any difficulty that might arise in the society either from the action of a superior officer or an inferior officer, what do you imagine would be the process of recovery for the society?—The treasurer has to find a guarantee.

178. Who takes action to make the wrongdoer pay up?—The society.

179. What society?—The benefit society.

179A. Where does it exist?—It has a committee and executive.