

with them. I take it that the various companies who form these societies have, no doubt, a very generous feeling towards their employes, and they start these societies possibly for the benefit of the latter; at the same time, they are always looking after their own interests, in my opinion—I mean the companies who form these societies.

146. And, of these two, which do you think is the predominating idea in the mind of the company?—I am rather inclined to think that their own interests predominate.

147. You say the existence of the Union Company's private benefit society has taken some members from your order?—I could not say it has taken them away, but I know there were more seamen members of my lodge before the Union Company's society started than there are at the present time.

148. Do you know of instances in which men have not joined your lodge because of the existence of the Union Company's benefit society?—No; I could not say.

149. *The Chairman.*] Do you believe it is for the benefit of workmen that private benefit societies should be established—I am not speaking of the Union Company—in which the employer has the controlling interest in return for his subsidy?—I do not think it is beneficial to the working-men at all.

150. *Mr. Fisher.*] You think registration would abolish all complaints on the part of the men?—Yes; because it would alter the constitution of the society as to the controlling-power.

151. *Hon. Major Steward.*] In the case where an employer contributes a portion of the funds, should or should not that employer have a representation in proportion to the amount that he contributes?—Well, I consider that if an employer contributes towards the funds of a society he does it of his own free-will, and I really do not think he should ask for representation if he is contributing out of generosity towards the men in his employ.

152. You think he should, then, be prepared to trust his employes to administer the fund?—I do.

153. If he keeps the controlling-power himself you begin to doubt his philanthropy?—I do certainly doubt it.

GEORGE THOMAS SCOONES was examined on oath.

154. *The Chairman.*] You are an officer of a friendly society?—I am a member and past officer of the Loyal Dunedin Lodge, I.O.O.F., M.U.

155. How long have you been an Oddfellow?—About sixteen or seventeen years.

156. Can you tell us from your own personal knowledge of any man who, having been an Oddfellow, has relinquished his lodge on purpose to join a private benefit society?—Do you mean in my lodge?

157. As an Oddfellow, whether in your lodge or another. Do you know of any man having left his lodge to join a private benefit society?—Well, I can truthfully say I have no knowledge of any such thing.

158. Have you heard anything about such a thing having occurred, or any grumbling in the friendly societies as to their members having been taken away by private benefit societies?—I want to tell the truth, and I cannot say that I have, except perhaps the man in the street. I have certainly never heard of it in the lodge.

159. Was your lodge a member of that dispensary here?—Yes; I was its delegate.

160. Do you remember the friendly societies objecting to a private benefit society joining that dispensary?—Yes; there was no private benefit society affiliated to it, because it would be against the rules.

161. *Mr. McLean*, in his evidence, said the Union Company's society was affiliated: was he wrong?—He was under a misapprehension of the fact. I was on the board at the time, and should know.

162. There was some understanding?—Yes; they wrote to the board asking on what terms the board would supply them with medicine, and, I believe, asking to be allowed to join, but I cannot say. Certainly it would have been against the rules, because every society must be registered before it is affiliated. The answer sent back was that we would supply them with medicine—at least, to the end of the year—on receipt of their payment to capital of 5s. per member. I do not think there was any premium paid. They were to pay this sum as a deposit, and they were to get medicine at the same rates as our members.

163. That was the only connection?—Yes; as a matter of fact, they lifted their capital when they withdrew, and we cannot do that. If our society were to withdraw we would have to leave our capital behind. This 5s. per member was like a guarantee of good faith.

164. Have you any idea as to the advantage or disadvantage of a friendly society being registered? What do you conceive to be the benefits that a registered society has over a private benefit society, if any?—I think a registered society would have a benefit at law supposing the secretary or treasurer were defaulters.

165. From the machinery provided by the Friendly Societies Act?—Yes. To tell you candidly, I have heard of secretaries being defaulters, and it has been said you cannot get at them because the society was not registered. I am speaking in a general way; I am not a secretary, nor have I any intimate knowledge of such matters.

166. *Mr. Fisher.*] Is there any feeling of antagonism between the registered societies and the unregistered?—Am I to speak for my own society?

167. As you please?—My own lodge has maintained an indifference to the whole question. In fact, when I was delegate to the dispensary, and this discussion was at its most bitter point, my lodge left the matter entirely in the hands of its delegates. They treated it as a commercial transaction; they did not care if the Union Company withdrew or were allowed to stop.

168. Your lodge stood aloof; but there was a bitter feeling on the part of other friendly societies, not in your lodge?—Not in the Manchester Unity. I cannot speak for societies I am not