

connected with; but in the discussions, if some of the delegates voiced the sentiment of their societies, there must have been a very bitter feeling. If some of the societies were as keen as their delegates, there was a bitter feeling, but that was not my experience, so far as my own lodge was concerned.

169. What is your experience and opinion? Is it that private benefit societies should be registered or unregistered? This is a crucial point: what do you think of it?—Well, all our Manchester Unity societies are registered, and we consider ourselves really the best of the friendly societies, and we consider it absolutely necessary to be registered. We pretend to lead the van, or the Manchester Unity does, in friendly society matters.

170. Let us get to the point. Is it your opinion that private benefit societies would be better registered or unregistered?—I do not care about expressing my personal opinions. I will give you facts, as much as you like.

171. Do you think it better, in your opinion, that these private benefit societies should be registered or not: surely you have an opinion on that point?—Well, since it is the universal thing for all solid friendly societies to be registered, I think it would be better to register them. I would like to see all benefit societies registered, seeing that the live ones are.

JOHN WALLACE DUNCAN was examined on oath.

172. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—I am a steward, late on the s.s. "Manapouri."

173. What is it you would like to tell us?—It was only to tell you that I have been a member of the Union Company's benefit society since the latter part of 1892, and that no pressure was brought to bear upon me to join it. I am quite satisfied with the representatives of the men.

174. Do you belong to any other society?—No.

175. We had a lot of evidence of that pressure?—I know other men in the Union Company's employ who do not belong to the society. It never made any difference in our department.

176. *Mr. Fisher.*] You have no complaint to make of any kind whatever?—No. I have not heard of any one in our department being forced to join.

177. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Did you ever know of any man being refused employment because he was not a member?—No.

178. Did you ever know of a case of a vacancy where two men presented themselves, one being previously a member of the benefit society and the other a member of a friendly society?—I do not know that. I have seen where a number of us were idle at the same time and a non-society man got the preference. I have known of those cases. There are no less than three; they may belong to an outside society, but they do not belong to ours.

179. Those men may have been members of a friendly society?—Yes.

180. You know the rules insist they shall be one or the other?—Yes. In the cases I am talking about one of the men, I think, does not belong to any society; but I know three of them are employed to-day by the Union Company, and they are not in the benefit society.

181. *Mr. Fisher.*] You know of no compulsion having been used to induce or compel men to join the benefit society?—No; not that I can speak of.

182. You know nothing of compulsion, you say. What do you think of this clause in the recent agreement between the Seamen's Union and the Union Steamship Company, where it states, "that after the 30th September next it shall not be compulsory on any member in the fleet to join." If you take the natural deduction from that, what does it mean?—It means it has been compulsory. At the same time, no one ever asked me to join. I joined the society of my own free-will.

183. *Hon. Major Steward.*] You are not aware of any instance where compulsion was used?—No.

184. *Mr. Fisher.*] I am only calling your attention to the rules of the benefit society and to this most recent agreement between the Union Steamship Company and the Seamen's Union. Therefore, when you say you know of no influence or compulsion having been brought to bear at all, you are merely speaking of your personal experience?—Yes.

185. You do not speak against these rules and this agreement?—No; I only speak of what has come within my own experience.

JAMES GLEN was examined on oath.

186. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—I am a cook, late of the s.s. "Brunner."

187. What is your age?—Fifty-three years.

188. How long have you been in the Union Company's service?—About ten or eleven years.

189. How long have you been in the benefit society?—Since it started.

190. Are you still in the Union Company's employ?—Yes; I left the "Brunner" six weeks ago.

191. Have you left the service?—No; my name is on the books for a job.

192. Can you tell us anything about this society?—It has been beneficial to me in a good many ways. I am getting up in years now, and I sometimes require to go off work.

193. During the time you are off you get assistance from the society?—I get £1 a week and the doctor as well.

194. I understood that was when you are ill?—Yes; I get nothing when out of work.

195. But supposing you are out of work for a long time, and are not able to keep up your subscriptions?—Well, that has occurred before, and they suspend me for three months, and I do not make any payments at all.

196. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Then, you can pay up the arrears and go on again?—Well, if you are three months off you have no arrears. If you are not three months I expect you have to pay up.