

4. What was your capacity then?—An able seaman.

5. And this occurred notwithstanding you were a member of the Foresters?—I told them repeatedly I was a member of the Foresters; and they kept on each different set of articles we signed the different men who did not belong to the society at that date, and they were told if they did not join they would have to leave the service. Some of the men in the ship will never join the society.

6. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Were these men also members of friendly societies?—Not so far as I know; one of them was a Druid.

7. *The Chairman.*] I may ask you to confine your evidence as far as possible to the point as to men who were already in friendly societies being compelled to join, because the Commissioners are pretty well assured, and it has been acknowledged by those in charge of the Union Company, that if a man did not belong to any other friendly society it was compulsory for him to join their society at that time?—I have seen that by the Press, and, of course, according to that, my information would be of no use to the Commission. They have already acknowledged there has been compulsion; but do they say there is no compulsion at the present time?

*The Chairman.* : They say there will be no compulsion after the 30th September, because they have entered into an agreement with the Federated Seamen's Union.

*Witness.* : It states in that agreement that new men joining the company's service will not be compelled to join, but they ask these men all the same.

8. *The Chairman.*] Now?—Yes.

9. It is not mere hearsay; you swear to that point?—Yes, I can swear to it.

10. Are they led to infer that any preference will be given to those joining the society?—I cannot say that for certain. I would not swear to that; but what I will swear to is this: that in two instances men were told that as the articles would be up in a few days—say, at the end of May—it would be advisable for them to join the society.

11. What do you understand by "advisable"? What is the alternative?—Well, the alternative was that they could do the other thing if they did not join. What the other thing was I do not know, but I leave people to think for themselves. My own opinion is they would go out of the service altogether. Mr. Kennedy, the manager of the company here, called upon me, and refuted the statement I wrote down to Dunedin in this direction, and said he had written statements from the men I referred to. It appears that the company wrote these statements, but they did not apply to the present cases. These statements only applied to something away back eighteen months or two years ago.

12. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Do you mean to say that they are given to understand that it is necessary they should join this society irrespective of whether they are members or not of friendly societies?—No; these men I am alluding to now are not members of any society. One man, only recently arrived out here from England, told the purser he had not been in the country five months.

13. *The Chairman.*] I may tell you that circulars have been produced to us on behalf of the Union Company by their officers strictly enjoining on them not to have as members of the benefit society men who were members of friendly societies?—Well, of course, these two men were not members of any friendly society.

14. It simply amounts to this, then: that, so far as your evidence goes, men who are not members of any friendly society are now asked to join the Union Company's benefit society?—That is so.

15. Do you see any objection to their merely asking men to join, providing they are not otherwise insured against sickness?—So long as they were registered benefit societies it would be a beneficial thing for seafaring men who are travelling all over the world; I think it would be a good thing if they joined the Oddfellows or Druids or Foresters, like myself. I have been a Forester in America, England, Australia, and New Zealand.

16. But there are a large number of seamen who do not belong to any organization?—Quite so.

17. Is it or is it not better that they should belong to some society?—Speaking for myself, I should say it is. I have always belonged to one.

18. If these men do not take the trouble to join a friendly society, do you not think they should be asked to join one in their own fleet?—I do not think so, in a society where the chief officers of the company govern the whole thing. I should imagine, if the society were registered, and made to conform with the rules laid down for registered friendly societies, there might not be such a great amount of objection; and, again, if no compulsion were used. In other societies there is no compulsion, and there are big memberships. I think there are some five hundred to eight hundred members in the lodge I belong to.

19. Can you tell us of your own knowledge whether your own lodge, or any other lodge you know of, suffered at all through the men having to join the Union Company's society?—Well, I would not say whether it was through having to join it, but I will give you this incident. The Court I belong to publishes a half-yearly balance-sheet, and it was shown that seventeen members had run out that half-year. Now, ten out of the seventeen were seamen; but I am not going to say for a moment that these men joined the Union Company's benefit society or that they were in the Union Company's service. The thing suggested itself to me, knowing from my own practical experience that what we call "deep-water sailors" do not as a rule belong to friendly societies, and if they did it would not be in New Zealand—so the idea suggested itself to me that these men were coast sailors and not deep-water sailors.

20. *Hon. Major Steward.*] You are aware of the agreement which has been entered into between the organization you represent and the Union Company?—Yes.

21. Do you know that one of the conditions of that agreement is after the 30th September, at any rate, there is to be no compulsion of any kind?—Yes, I know that.

22. And that as regards men joining the fleet now membership is optional?—Yes.