

23. Well, supposing those conditions are faithfully carried out, and the society is registered with its present rules, subject to proper provisions as to the election of committees, do you think there would be any objection to the existence of this society?—Well, I think there would while the Union Company has anything to do with it, because even the committee have to consider their bread and butter, and the company can always bring force to bear on these committees, in more ways than one.

24. We have evidence that the company's representatives very seldom attend the committee meetings: are you aware that the company contributes to the funds of the society?—20 per cent., I think.

25. So long as it does that, should it not have some representation in proportion to its contribution?—But they are thinking of withdrawing that subsidy.

26. That is not the point. Do you think it would be fair that they should be represented in proportion to their contribution?—Well, they might be; but, you see, their power is very great.

27. If the company only had a fifth representation?—They have the power all the same; they can use their influence by means of the men's bread and butter.

28. If membership becomes purely voluntary?—For instance, if I were in a boat, they could give me the sack, and say it was because I did not suit, or because they did not require me any longer. It would not be on account of the benefit society.

29. You mean that, although there is no compulsion, it is a cast of "must"?—Quite so.

30. What would you say to the evidence given before us that there are some members in the fleet who are not members of the benefit society, and belong to no other friendly society, and have still been retained in the service?—There are some exceptional cases, and possibly they are over the age at which the Union Company enrol men in the society—that is, forty years. I do not know of any young man under that age who is not a member of a friendly society who has not been compelled to join the benefit society. My knowledge of the men is pretty extensive.

31. *The Chairman.*] We were told by Thomas Robertson, baker, late of the "Talune," that "he did not belong to the benefit society or to any other friendly society. He had, however, always been kept on in his employment?"—Well, you see, that is an exceptional case; and they cannot always get bakers to go to sea. It makes a vast difference.

32. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Can you give us any direct evidence as to any persons whose services have been dispensed with under these circumstances—viz., who were not members of the Union Company's benefit society nor any other society?—Yes; but not recently.

33. How long ago?—I think the last one I knew of was in 1892.

34. That would be prior to the alterations made altogether?—Even if such is the case, in any recent case the Union Company has always other ways of evading the question—by saying the men do no suit, or cannot do the work.

35. Does it not occur to you the company could still do that, even supposing the society were registered?—In the event of the society being registered, I do not think the Union Company would take so much interest in it. I joined the "Mawhera" on the 3rd January, 1891. I would not be certain as to the month the circular *re* the society was sent round. I did not take any particular notice of it at the time. But then the papers came again, stating that a certain number of boats had joined the society, and that it was advisable for us to join. Not one in the boat I was in joined the society. Now, the trip after that all hands were called aft, and papers were put in front of us in the presence of the skipper, most of the engineers, and the purser; and the skipper read out a pamphlet or agreement to the effect that we, the undersigned, hereby bound ourselves not to belong to any society that the Union Company did not approve of, and to sever our connection with any union or federation that we might belong to at the present time. It applied to all in the boat. This rule has been amended recently, because the company saw things have changed, and consequently they are changing the rules. It is a mere matter of force of circumstances, I suppose. Well, they put this agreement in front of us, and the men would not join. They came round again and said every boat in the fleet had joined with the exception of the "Mawhera." This always came through the purser. I do not know Mr. Kirby.

36. What happened then; you still did not join?—No; and the donkeyman would not join, and he was sacked right away. The engineer wanted to keep him there.

37. Have you ever heard of or seen any such circulars as these: "To Purser, 'Ovalau.'—If Wilson can satisfy you that he was a member of the Foresters before he joined the company's service he need not join our society, but if he cannot do this enrol him forthwith.—14th August, 1895." "To Chief Officer, 'Ohau.'—Cannot admit O. Johnson to the society, as he is a financial member of the Druids.—14th November, 1895"? You see they have absolutely refused to take them in, not merely instructed them not to join; that is as late as the 14th November, 1895. Have you heard anything of circumstances of that sort?—Yes; I think I have one here, which goes a little further than that, as follows: "To Purser, 'Grafton.'—Please enrol Dunning if under forty years of age and recommended by Mr. McNicol, and inform Dorling that unless he joins forthwith, paying as from 1st April last, instructions will be issued for his dismissal from the service.—11th May, 1896."

38. Were these men members of friendly societies?—The last man was. I wrote to the Star of Egmont Lodge, at Patea, and I asked if this man was a financial Druid, and the reply was that he was, and had been a financial member for some considerable time. I may say, in reference to this matter, that the Hon. George McLean, when the Private Benefit Societies Bill was before the House last session, said this letter had been stolen and photographed, and that a photographic copy of the latter had been sent to all the friendly societies in the colony. I was the man who had that letter photographed, and only one copy was taken, and it was given in the House of Representatives.

39. *The Chairman.*] We had the Dorling matter fully explained to us in Dunedin. It was stated to us in evidence in Dunedin that the benefit society was used to enable the Union Company