105. Supposing such a thing could not be done on the present actuarial basis, do you think the officers would consent to have the subscription increased?—I am afraid not.

106. They want to have their cake and eat it too?—That is so; they want more money than the money subscribed will allow. £25,000 was granted by the members in the first instance because of the older members on the staff at the time who had certain claims to make up for their back payments, the £25,000 being calculated on a certain rate of interest. But money has dropped since; so that, if the contributions are to be increased, for that reason there ought to be some further contribution from the society, because of these older officers. The fund at present shows a surplus.

107. *Hon. Major Steward.*] But its income is not so great as it was calculated to be on account of the fall in the rate of interest?—That is so.

108. And therefore the fund is not so strong as it was intended to be, and is not able to bear such great burdens?—Yes.

109. *Mr. Fisher.*] The scheme or fund is universal so far as the society is concerned?—Yes.

110. And all officers contribute?—Yes.

111. *Hon. Major Steward.*] And all officers know of the existence of the fund, and that it is a condition of their employment?—Yes; it is made a condition when they join the service, and in the articles of agreement which they sign it is set out as one of the conditions. They must subscribe to it; and they also sign an agreement made with the trustees of the fund that they are agreeable to the conditions stated therein.

112. So that, in point of fact, they accept salary less a reduction in view of future benefits?—Yes.

113. Do you know, roughly speaking, how many officers there are in the employ of the society throughout the colonies?—There were 267 on the 31st December last, the average age at that date being twenty-eight and a half years.

114. Can you tell us how many are drawing pensions under the scheme?—There have been two annuitants on the scheme, one of whom died on the 24th January last; and one was granted a gratuity on account of ill-health.

115. Is that all since the origination of the scheme?—Yes.

116. *The Chairman.*] This is not used in any way nor regarded as an insurance?—No; we make all clerks also enter into a bond to assure themselves; they must assure for some amount, and it is assigned to the society for the benefit of their wives and children or relatives, and so on. Every officer must be insured for the amount of his salary.

117. *Mr. Fisher.*] Do very many officers leave the service?—No; it is very seldom. None of the officers leave the society in these days unless it is for a very large increase in salary. One officer here left about eighteen months ago, but he has been dissatisfied since, and he would sooner be back in our society again. He considers it is worth more with this scheme of ours and the greater certainty of employment in an office like ours.

118. Do any return after having left?—We do not take them back. Once a man leaves the service he is told plainly he cannot come back again.

George Lambert was examined on oath.

119. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—I am receiver of rents to the Public Trust Office.

120. You were formerly in the employ of the Australian Mutual Provident Society?—Yes, for close on twenty years.

121. Can you tell us anything about the provident fund, and how it is regarded by officers in the service?—I subscribed to that fund for years and years. The subscription to the fund was arbitrarily deducted from my salary regularly, and no acknowledgment was ever given to me for that amount, nor was any information, so far as I could learn, to be obtained from any of the staff concerning the fund. Now and again I had some circular from the head office stating that a certain amount had been received, and a certain amount disbursed, and that there was a certain amount in hand. I must say I looked upon it as a very one-sided affair altogether.

122. Was it a condition of the service when you joined that you would have to subscribe?—No; I joined the society in 1876, long before the fund was started.

123. Was any agreement sent round to officers in 1888 to sign?—Yes; I signed that, but it was annulled by the action of the board subsequently. The first provident fund established for the benefit of the clerks was a very good one indeed. It was found upon examination to work so favourably in favour of those who had been a long time in the service that the members took it up very keenly in Sydney, and opposed it, and had the fund deliberately upset. A further scheme was proposed, and the subscriptions were continued, but the benefits were nothing like the first. I had to subscribe to that fund, because it was simply taken off my salary, and when I left the service I was unable to participate in the benefit.

124. The benefit offered was that of a pension, was it not?—No, there were several benefits; there was a pension, and there was a payment on disablement, and there was another which I cannot exactly recollect. I think there were three options, so far as I can recollect, but I distinctly remember one on total disablement and one on pension.

125. You were not disabled and not old enough to have a pension?—No.

126. Then, how could you claim either of these two?—I had no claim, but I have a moral claim on the money I have paid in, because I did not come on the fund. The position I take up is that they should return to me the money I had been compulsorily compelled to subscribe; and another officer who left our office and joined another society made an application to have his money returned, and was refused point-blank. The fund is run by the head office. My idea is that it should be run by disinterested people, such as the Public Trust Office, and not by an