about by the foregoing causes—namely, "inadequacy of contribution"—and in the process of putting their houses in order the operation of spring cleaning has resulted in a partial reformation only, the existing members always taking the precaution that when it became necessary to raise the scale of contributions an exemption was granted in their case, inasmuch as it was decided that they should continue at the old rate, while future entrants were to pay the increased rate, equal benefits being dispensed in all cases. At a Friendly Society Conference held in Wellington in 1906, at which delegates from all the societies were present—and it was the most representative Conference ever held in New Zealand, because the Prime Minister accorded the delegates the special privilege of a free pass over the railways—amongst their recommendations was a portion of the matter now contained in section 15, and I desire to emphasize the concluding portion of the recommendations—viz., "That all present members were to be exempted from the scale of contributions that was to be certified to by an actuary as sufficient to meet the benefits stated, and that the recommendation should come into effect on a given date." If the present Bill becomes law it will come into operation on the 1st January next year. Self-condemnation in the shape of exemption appears to be written large in the finale of the recommendation, and a coincident factor that was simultaneously operating certainly deserves thoughtful consideration. The *personnel* of the Conference comprised a majority of men who had passed the meridian of life and were well up in years, a natural corollary being that possibly they were members of long standing in their respective orders, and consequently would be paying less per week than other members in their respective lodges who joined at the same age under the partially reformed condition of contributions, and all of whom receive equal benefits; and as there had been a large numerical increase in membership during the last ten years it is quite possible that members who have joined under the new *régime* will, at no far-distant date, commence an investigation into the indefensible position occupied by the other members, the position being that one section of members is penalised, and in an inverse ratio the other section is virtually subsidised. In the face of this existing state of affairs a justification certainly exists for a student of friendly-society problems to speculate in the opinion that the new members may move in the direction of straightening up the various scales of contributions for existing members by taking steps to carry into effect the equalisation of payments on a graduated scale, so that equal payments shall elicit equal benefits, the present adjustment of payments being disproportionate to the requirements of equity. The following is a copy of a remit from the 1906 Conference: "Adequate scale of contributions (existing societies) —That no society be allowed to carry on business without having an adequate scale of contributions commensurate with the benefits proposed and approved of by a competent actuary, which scale shall not disturb the contributions of existing members, but shall be brought into existence on a stated date, and shall apply to all those joining after that date." I respectfully submit that if section 15 becomes law every avenue through their own rules by which the lodges could approach the question of unequal and inequitable contributions, with a view of righting the wrong, will completely vanish, and section 15, without retrospection, appears to a good many of us as the bolstering-up of a monopoly which will compel one member to compulsorily contribute towards liquidating the deficit of another member's contributions. There is also another remit from the Friendly Societies Conference of 1906: "Recommendation to societies—That in the opinion of the Conference no scheme of friendly-societies benefits is complete which does not provide for cessation of sick and funeral fund contributions after the age of sixty-five years, and the substitution of a fixed annuity in lieu of sick-pay." The testimony contained in a Bill (National Annuities) that was circulated under the sponsorship of the Right Hon. the Prime Minister is a confirmatory definition that the societies required some auxiliary means of increasing their funds, and the method proposed by the right honourable gentleman is contained in section 6, subsection (2), of the said Bill—namely, "That in cases of prolonged sickness the societies named receive a partial refund of sickness expenditure on a scale proportionate to the various ages of sick-pay recipients." This was a broad and humanitarian proposal, and the ethics of it appeal to me in the following way: that it is distinctly more honourable and offers less liability to loss of dignity for a society to accept a refund of sick-pay from the State than to compel some individuals within their fold to make up for the deficiency of others. One case that I know of is where two men of the same age at the time of joining, but at different periods of initiation, are paying as follows: A pays a certain amount to the Sick Fund, and B pays 120 per cent. more, both being entitled to equal sick-benefits. Therefore it resolves itself as follows: Under the proposal contained in the Annuities Bill the societies would receive a sick-pay refund from the revenue of the Dominion, to which every member had contributed in either a direct or indirect way, whilst in the present state, if I may be permitted to coin a phrase, the efficients of a friendly society have to partially provide for the non-efficients. I therefore respectfully ask for the deletion of section 15. Section 16: This appears to be specially devised to deal solely with the "death-levy system" of the 13,000 members of the Druids Order. We are at present complying in the case of death allowances, by paying the usual one as disbursed by all of the societies, but with the addition of an extra £100 on the death of a member. Our *modus operandi* is of a simple nature: On the death of a member the governing body pays the £100, and at the end of each quarter all the subordinate branches of the order are called upon to remit to the executive a sum per member equal to the disbursement of special death levies paid during said quarter; and many of our members are insured for this moderate amount who under other circumstances would be unable to combine membership in both a friendly society and insurance company. The position is as follows: that under our co-operative system a sum of 15s. per member per annum by all friendly societies in the Dominion would have been sufficient to pay £100 for every member that died in all the societies during the past twenty-five years. We have no objection to any other society carrying on business on similar lines, but we do ask to be permitted to still carry on the benefits on the lines of practically demonstrating within a limited area being able to give the maximum of death benefit at a minimum of