cost. The present position is quite clear, and is not susceptible of being successfully controverted. I understand that actuaries do not view with favour our levy system, on the ground that no reserve fund is created. My answer to that is that a reserve fund is not required; and to amplify my answer I quote the words of Sir Joseph Ward when speaking a few years ago on an Imprest Supply Bill. The right honourable gentleman stated, *inter alia*, when discussing benefit societies, "I refer to these cases, among other things, to call attention to the fact that it is not so much upon the amount of accumulated capital they have to draw upon that such schemes should be judged as on what is at the back of them." I trust that section 16 will be deleted. Section 18, subsection (2): We ask that this may be amended so that an appeal can be allowed against the Actuary as well as the Registrar, and also that some simpler and less expensive a tribunal of appeal may be provided than that of the Supreme Court. An appeal is provided for, but there is a feeling of unanimity amongst members of friendly societies that as the expenses would come out of the incidental funds, which barely pay the cost of management, some more simple and less expensive tribunal should be set up. In the previous Bill the Actuary was never brought to light. He is a new importation, and we ask that the same principle of machinery shall apply to the Actuary as to the Registrar. Section 33, subsection (1): This is in relation to the annual returns that every society in the Dominion has to furnish. Hitherto it has been the custom that the secretary, after compiling his return, should have three months in which to send it in—to the 31st March. It is proposed in the Bill that only two months be given, and we say that the words "first day of March" should read "thirty-first day of March," and that provision be made in the subsection for the acceptance of annual returns from those societies who close their yearly balances at the end of November. This is an item which specially affects the Druids. We close our year at the end of November, and it is a vital question with us, and a matter of heartburning amongst all our secretaries. We close a month earlier than other societies, so that Christmas may be free to everybody, and in order that we may have a chance of getting our subscriptions in. Section 37: This is one of the most important matters in the Bill, for it not only concerns the Druids, but all the societies in the Dominion. We ask that the word "balance-sheet" be substituted for the word "return," or that the word "return" be deleted and the word "balance-sheet" be substituted. I might state for the information of the Committee that an annual return totally apart from the balance-sheet is sent in to the Government every year. In the Bill, further on, it is proposed to give every member of a society the right to demand a copy of the return, and it would be possible for half a dozen members to form a combination and put the secretary to the trouble of writing out these returns, as each lodge possesses only one copy of the return. We ask that our balance-sheet, which in most of the lodges is a printed copy of the transactions, be substituted. Sections 55 and 56: In reference to these we merely ask for the simplification of the machinery clauses. The present Bill mentions £50 as the amount to be dealt with, and it is proposed, briefly, that if a member dies and leaves no will, if the amount does not exceed £100, the trustees can administer the funds on what appears to them credible evidence, and we ask that, where the words "one hundred pounds" appear, the words "and fifty" be inserted, to make the limitation £150 instead of £100. There is a suggestion here made by Mr. Tanner of most vital importance to every member of a friendly society—viz., that all moneys from sick and other benefit funds be exempted from attachment by any legal process. If that is put in the Bill it will be of great benefit to every friendly society, and save the members a lot of trouble. In dealing with section 15 and the inadequacy of the contributions, I want to point out that this will mean giving a certificate of title to some societies which actuarially have not a leg to stand on. There are two societies in New Zealand that have manœuvred a lot in endeavouring to engineer the retention of sections 15 and 16, and possibly they may have been actuated by the following motives: One society was valued in 1906, and the result disclosed the fact that they showed an actual deficiency of about £4 per member as compared with the result of the previous valuation. Another society in the South Island showed a deficiency in one of its lodges of £64 per member at its last valuation, the previous valuation being £47 deficiency—in other words, they went to leeward £17 per member during the intervening period of five years between the last and previous valuation; and the Government Bill, if passed with section 15 as it stands at present, would have the effect of giving the hall-mark of security to such a friendly society as I have stated, which society, in my opinion, requires straightening up. The last parliamentary paper shows that there are a number of societies which have not reached the period of valuation yet, but those that have been valued present the following results, as per friendly societies' annual reports for the years 1904 and 1907: 1904—Financial societies 105, unfinancial 286, total 391; 1907—financial societies 98, unfinancial 333, total 431. I submit it is a grossly unfair thing to saddle new members with a burden they are not entitled to bear. In conclusion I desire to state, in a recapitulation of my statement, that from our point of view the retention of section 16, if it becomes law without modification, will be the means of inflicting a considerable amount of hardship on the Druids; and in asking that our request may receive consideration at the hands of the Committee I beg to again call attention to the prophetic utterances that were expressed inferentially by the Right Hon. the Premier on the occasion I have referred to. In subjecting those words to an analytical test with a view of utilising them as a factor of advocacy the result that presents itself to me in its analogous bearing to our cause is that during the public career of the Prime Minister he has never phrased an expression in brevity of language that was impregnated with more truth. The nature of the inferential security is demonstrated by us that, no matter what differences may exist amongst us in the internal working and administration of our lodges, to-day every individual of the 13,000 members stands shoulder to shoulder on the question to us—viz., the proposal that is now staring us in the face—the sweeping-away of the machinery that enables us to pay a special death levy of £100 on the death of a member.