

predetermined sum of money on the death of a member or his wife, such sum being raised by means of an equal levy on the members of our society. If the decision of the Committee is not in favour of striking out the obnoxious provisions in clauses 15 and 16 altogether, we certainly earnestly ask that you will protect our society to that extent. We do not ask for a monopoly, although at the same time we would not refuse it. If sections 15 and 16 should be deleted, sections 26 and 27 should go with them, as they bear on the same subject.

12. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] I think you stated that about sixteen deaths occurred in the year, at a cost of 8s. per member?—It has never cost us more than 8s. a year. The deaths now amount to more than sixteen.

13. What is about the age of the members?—The average age is thirty-two or thirty-three. We take in members at sixteen and not over forty.

14. You said that the cause of the opposition was simply jealousy: do you not think it might be due to a desire for financial soundness as well?—That is a very good-sounding reason; but, in addition to other things that have come to our knowledge, we can point to the printed report of the Manchester Unity meeting to show that they desire to stop every society carrying on business on other lines than their own.

15. Your society objects to its young members bearing the old members' death levy?—No. We look upon the sixpenny levy as an act of benevolence, and the members as a whole decided to levy this amount on the death of every member.

16. Can you not frame some basis to meet this death duty on some sound financial scheme?—I presume you mean actuarially sound. It would be far more costly.

17. Because it would be sound and this is unsound?—We do not think it is unsound.

18. Why would it be more costly if this is sound?—We can only take the demands made by the actuary, and to comply with their demands it would be more costly. I have a table here of the A.M.P.'s Industrial Department, which has taken up weekly or fortnightly payments for insurance, and taking the age of a person at thirty it would cost £3 5s. a year to insure for £100.

19. You told us that you have an exceptional increase of members?—Yes.

20. And they contribute to this fund?—Yes.

21. Do you not think we should see that this system is on a sound basis before other societies join?—Many new members who join our society do so principally for this particular benefit. They understand the principle of the thing, and are quite willing to join. A member said to me only this week that he wished it was doubled.

22. *Mr. Jennings.*] Was not the form of levy adopted to stop the hat continually going round in the lodges when a member died?—That was one of the main objects, and practically since we started this scheme the hat has not been seen.

23. And there has been no complaint in connection with the levy?—No. I know if we proposed to strike it out we should "get the run" very quickly.

24. With regard to auditing, do you think the stringency of the clause is too great, or would you like to see it made stronger if possible (clause 34)?—Personally I think it a very admirable principle to put in the Bill, because I think something stronger is wanted with regard to audits than what is in at present. I have advocated the same thing for years. I have an article here which I wrote on this matter four years ago, and, as it is admitted that these societies save the Government a large amount of money which but for them would require to be spent on charitable aid, I think Government would be justified in going to some expenditure in auditing the societies' accounts. I believe a great deal of the present dissatisfaction is due to the incompetency of many of our secretaries in dividing the funds, and not so much due to the inadequacy of the contributions. The complex system of accounts and returns required by the Registrars is too much for the class of secretaries we get in some districts. Too much of a member's contributions sometimes goes into the Management Fund, and if the Government would provide some assistance in the way suggested a large amount of the clamour made with regard to the solvency of the societies would be done away with.

25. You will admit that the system of auditing in the past has been rather lax?—In a great many cases the audit is a perfect farce.

26. Section 52, "Loans to members on personal security": You will see that "Out of any separate Loan Fund, to be formed by contributions of deposits of its members, a registered society may make loans to its members on their personal security, with or without sureties." Do you think that is properly safeguarded?—The loan can only be made out of a special Loan Fund contributed for the special purpose.

27. If there was a special Loan Fund it might be abused: I take exception to the words "with or without security"?—It depends upon the societies themselves. This is another instance of the provision which allows members to combine together for any purpose they choose. I do not know of any lodge which has such a fund.

28. You are of opinion that if this right to levy a death contribution were taken from the Druids it would be inimical to the interests of the members?—Yes, half the members would drop out in twelve months.

29. *Mr. Wood.*] You said that only about one-third of the members had wives?—I think I said the mortality of members' wives was only about a third of the members, and in building up the tables the Registrar debits all the members as if they had wives.

30. As a practical member of a lodge, can you say that since you have had this death levy your funds have proportionately increased?—The death levy does not affect our funds.

31. The increased contributions must have increased your funds?—We get more members by reason of the death levy, and our ordinary funds are increasing largely every year.