

92. You do not think a man would do so voluntarily?—I do not think so.

93. *Mr. Fisher.*] Have you heard men on board ship at any time discuss the regulations or the Union Company's benefit society itself?—I cannot say that I have, because I do not belong to the society, and never take any notice of what is going on in connection with it.

94. Are meetings held by members of the benefit society?—Not so far as I know.

95. Are meetings of the members of that society held anywhere else than in Dunedin?—That is more than I know. I do not know if they are held in Wellington or not.

96. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Do you know nothing about the working of the society?—I know nothing about it.

97. *The Chairman.*] Do you know whether the Foresters will take in a person who is over forty years of age?—Well, I really do not know. I read their rules when I joined—that is eighteen years ago—but not since.

98. Suppose the Union Company made it an absolute rule that no man could go into the service unless he joined the benefit society, all men over forty years of age are excluded?—There are some still working in the service who are over forty.

99. *Mr. Fisher.*] Have you heard that there is a great feeling of contentment and satisfaction amongst the men who belong to the Union Company's benefit society?—Well, I never take any notice of what they say so far as the society is concerned. In all cases you find some dissatisfaction.

JOHN AUSTIDE was examined on oath.

100. *The Chairman.*] What is your business?—I am engineers' storekeeper on the "Waihora."

101. How long have you been in the Union Company's service?—Between eight and nine years.

102. Always on the same ship?—I have been about six years and a half in the "Waihora," and about two years and a half in the "Takapuna."

103. Are you a member of any friendly society?—Only the Union Company's benefit society.

104. Were you a member of any friendly society previously?—No.

105. How long have you been a member?—Since the beginning of the society in 1891.

106. Will you tell us what your contribution is?—It is 5s. a month.

107. What benefits do you get?—£1 a week if sick and free doctor and medicine.

108. And for your family also?—Yes.

109. What do you get at death?—£20 I think.

110. If your wife dies do you get anything?—£10.

111. *Mr. Fisher.*] You are supplied with a printed copy of the rules?—Yes.

112. *The Chairman.*] When you joined the society did you go through any medical examination?—Yes.

113. Have you ever heard of any case of any man belonging to the society who was not asked to go through a medical examination?—I do not know, personally.

114. Do you know of any persons working for the Union Company who are not members of this society?—Oh, yes; several.

115. I mean in the ships?—There is one in our ship who does not belong to the Union Company's society.

116. Does he belong to any other society?—Yes.

117. Do you not know of anybody who is allowed to work in the ship unless a member of some benefit society?—I do not—at least, there is an elderly man in our ship who does not belong to the Union Company's benefit society, and I do not think he belongs to any other.

118. Is there any limit of age after which a man cannot be taken into the Union Company's society; if a man is over forty will he be taken in?—I think so.

119. Will you tell us the name of that man who is not in the benefit society?—I do not know if he is in another society or not.

120. Did you ever hear that the society refused any members because there were more members than could find employment?—I have never heard that.

121. Do you know how many members have been rejected from the benefit society through being physically unfit or anything of that sort?—I cannot say how many.

122. How do you contribute towards this society—by means of a book?—Yes.

123. And it is deducted from your pay?—No.

124. Do you hand over the cash?—Yes. If you ask the purser to withdraw your contribution from the pay well and good; or, if not, he pays you in full and you pay the contribution yourself.

125. *Hon. Major Steward.*] It is not compulsorily deducted?—No; mine has never been. I can only answer for myself.

126. Did you ever hear of any man leaving a registered friendly society, like the Druids or Foresters, to join the Union Company's society?—I never heard of such a thing.

127. You would not consider it wise for them to do so?—No; if I belonged to one of them I would not leave it to join the Union Company's society.

128. Is there a man named Cummock working in the service at the present time who has not joined the benefit society?—Yes.

129. *Mr. Fisher.*] What is the proportion—take your own ship—of men who belong to the Union Company's benefit society as compared with other societies?—Well, nearly all belong to the Union Company's society on the firemen's side; all save one or two. As for the sailors, of course I do not know. Neither do I know what societies the men belong to. I only know two men in our department who do not belong to the Union Company's society, and they are Waackeldine and Cummock.