

289. You were told that this was absolutely necessary—that you could not enter the service unless you joined the society?—I was not told that. The mate gave me the card to go and see the doctor with four others.

290. You understood you had to go?—Oh, yes; we were all in it.

291. You have kept up your payments until now?—Yes; they take it every month regularly.

292. How do you make these payments?—It is kept off. Some pursers give us the full amount of our wages and let us pay them, and in other cases they deduct the contributions and pay us the balance.

293. Some pursers pay the wages in full and leave it to the men to pay their contributions, and others deduct the instalment and pay the balance to the men?—Yes.

294. *Mr. Fisher.*] You do not belong to any other benefit society?—Not now.

295. When you joined, what was said to you about the benefit society?—All that was said was a card was handed over to me to see the doctor, and I knew what that meant.

296. When you passed the doctor you joined the service?—Oh, I was in the service before that.

297. Then, you were in the service before you were told to go and see the doctor?—Yes.

298. You quite understood that when you passed the doctor you would have to pay these instalments?—Yes.

299. Have all the men who join the society to pass the doctor?—Yes.

300. Is pressure put upon men to make them join the benefit society?—Well, all who belong to other societies need not join.

301. So that in cases of men who do not belong to other societies pressure is put upon them to join the Union Company's society?—I do not know now. At one time I knew of men who had to leave the service because they did not belong to it.

302. That is not the case now?—I do not think so.

303. *Hon. Major Steward.*] They give preference to members of their own society in the matter of employment?—Yes.

304. *Mr. Fisher.*] Is there any feeling of objection on the part of the men about being compelled to join?—Yes; many think so, although the married men are satisfied.

305. *The Chairman.*] You mean the single men do not like it?—Yes.

306. *Mr. Fisher.*] You say that nearly all the men, except some of the married men, object to the compulsory membership of the society?—They do not care about it.

307. Therefore they do object?—They do not object to it altogether.

308. Do they know there will be a consequence if they do not join?—I dare say there is that feeling amongst them; I can understand they do not half like it.

309. But they accept the joining of the service with the joining of the society because they know they have to?—Yes.

310. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Have you recently received any intimation from the company or the society to the effect that they are going to give up making this a compulsory thing, and leave it to your own free will; have you been told that?—I am not aware of it.

311. *Mr. Fisher.*] You are a member of the society; have you received any intimation by word of mouth, by letter, or circular to the effect that the Union Company intend to abandon the management and leave it to the seamen?—I do not recollect.

312. If you cannot tell us, you being a member of the benefit society, who can?—I cannot answer that question.

313. It is very clear you never received any intimation to that effect. It appears to me very strange that a newspaper should have received the information and you, a member of the society, tell us you have not?—We get a report every six months.

314. I suppose some of the men read it?—As a rule they all do.

315. Are you aware of any member of a friendly society having to leave his lodge in order to join the Union Company's society?—I cannot answer that question.

JAMES CUMMOCK was examined on oath.

316. *The Chairman.*] What is your business?—I am a fireman on the s.s. "Waihora."

317. How old are you?—Fifty-two years.

318. How long have you been in the Union Company's service?—About fourteen years.

319. Do you belong to the Union Company's benefit society?—No.

319A. Can you tell us the reason why you do not belong?—Yes; altogether I was six months in arrears in my payments to the benefit society. I was idle for about six months, and when I got into another boat again they told me I was too old to rejoin, but that I was just to work away.

320. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Then, you had been a member of the society?—Yes; I was a member from the 1st June, 1891, till three years ago.

321. *The Chairman.*] How long altogether?—About two years and a half.

322. When out of employment was it because you had been discharged, or what?—No; I lost my passage in the "Waihora" in Melbourne. Then I got back into the same boat.

323. You wanted to rejoin but they would not let you?—Yes.

324. *Hon. Major Steward.*] What is the limit of age?—Fifty.

325. *The Chairman.*] Was there a time when thirty-eight years was the limit?—I cannot say.

326. *Mr. Fisher.*] You are not a member of the benefit society, therefore you have not a copy of their rules and regulations?—No.

327. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Did you ever receive any payment as a refund on account of what you had paid in?—No; not one payment.

328. *The Chairman.*] Has the company, out of kindness to you, made an exception in taking you back into their service while not allowing you to rejoin the benefit society?—Yes, I think so. I think they made an exception of me through kindness.