

221. Then, they are elected by the men in the service of the company?—Yes.

222. Do you think the committee, being so elected, fairly represents the views of the men on the boats?—Yes.

223. The numbers are six representing the seamen and seven for the company?—Yes.

224. Now, what do you think would happen—of course, this is only a problematical question—if any large question, any difficult question, came before the committee: which would be the dominant power in the settlement of that large and difficult question from your knowledge of the composition of the Board?—I could hardly say; it is so seldom you see the full thirteen there.

225. Suppose, for the purpose of this question, there is a full meeting of the Board, which do you think holds the predominant power?—Well, there is one thing—every one speaks as he likes.

226. Speaking of the committee altogether, how do you think, in the settlement of a large and difficult question, the settlement would result?—The seven would be the higher power, if you take it that way.

227. I referred just now to a large or difficult question arising. Suppose a strike came about, and the seven have the dominant power, what would become of the fund—the £4,300 on fixed deposit, which belongs to the benefit society, and really to the men?—The society can be dissolved by two-thirds of the members.

228. *The Chairman.*] Do the members who happen at that particular time to be in the society divide the accumulated funds amongst themselves?—They are supposed to.

229. *Mr. Fisher.*] Let us get at the legal position. The legal position is this—and I am glad you said one thing, if nothing else: that you preferred a registered to an unregistered society—this society, being unregistered, could not the seven having the dominant power have the disposition of the fund?—[The witness made no answer.]

230. You see, Mr. Wilson—and I ask you whether you agree with me in regard to this question—if this society were registered its regulations would have the force of law under the Friendly Societies Act. At present, no matter what I said here, they have no force in law. Now, I ask you again what you think, these rules having no force or power in law, would become of that £4,300?—I understand two-thirds of the members—

231. *The Chairman.*] Where is your security?—This piece of paper.

*Mr. Fisher:* I do not press the question; Mr. Wilson does not answer.

232. *The Chairman.*] We were told in evidence by one previous witness that “When I joined I had to sign a declaration that I belonged to no union that might be detrimental to the Union Company.” You never heard of such a thing having to be signed?—I never signed any document to that effect when the society started.

233. You think that a witness, in saying such a thing—that he had to sign a declaration that he belonged to no union that would be detrimental to the Union Company—was handling the truth carelessly?—I cannot say. I never signed any paper to that effect.

234. *Hon. Major Steward.*] You are a member of the committee, and I see by Rule 23 that your committee is to consist of twelve members—two sailors, two cooks or stewards, and two from the engine-room or stokehold, and six nominated by the company; and the next rule says that the managing director of the company shall be president of the society and *ex officio* a member of the committee?—Yes.

235. It is a fact, is it not, that the company's contribution to the funds of the society is limited to the 20-per-cent. subsidy?—Yes.

236. In other words, they contribute one-fifth of the funds, and the subscribing members four-fifths?—Yes.

237. Then, do you consider this is a fair representation: that the company, which contributes one-fifth of the funds, should have more than half of the representation, and the men, who subscribe four-fifths, should have less than half? Do you not think the men should be represented on the committee in proportion to their contributions? What is your opinion? The company subscribes or donates some £300 towards the yearly income; against that it has rather more than half of the members on the committee, although its contribution is smaller than the men's: do you think that is fair?—No.

238. You think that the men, subscribing four-fifths, should be represented on the committee to the extent of four-fifths, and the company, which subscribes one-fifth of the funds, should have a one-fifth representation?—Yes.

239. That would be fair?—Yes.

240. Well, if the society was registered, and provision made that the representation should be in proportion to the contributions, so that the men would have something like ten or eleven members on the committee, as against two or three of the company, would not that be a fair thing?—Yes.

241. Do you know, as a fact, whether the rates of contribution per month for the same age are the same in your society as in any of the friendly societies, or are they greater or less?—I think they are less, if anything.

242. And you derive the same benefits practically as do the members of the Druids or Foresters?—Yes.

243. The difference in rates of contribution is not very much, is it?—No.

244. Do you know what is done with any surplus that may accrue supposing the payments by the society for sick-pay and funerals, and so on, do not overtake in a considerable period of years the amounts paid in by the men and a balance accumulates: is there any provision to divide that balance?—No.

245. Is there any provision for a fixed auditing with a view to an adjustment of the scale of contributions—I do not mean annually, I mean at fixed periods—say, quinquennially, or every ten years?—Yes: See Rules 75 and 76.