

347. Here we have a statement by Mr. McLean that after the 30th September no further influence is to be used in any way, and the society is to become voluntary?—That is an erroneous idea of Mr. McLean's.

348. *Hon. Major Steward.*] In answer to a question by Mr. Fisher with regard to pressure, in putting which he read you a letter addressed to the purser of the "Grafton," I think your reply was that the secretary, in signing that letter, signed it on his own responsibility, and you disclaim that the company had anything to do with the exercise of that pressure?—The company had nothing to do with it.

349. *Mr. Fisher.*] It is sent from the company's office?—From the society's office.

350. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Here is the sixth annual report of your society, in which this very letter is set out; but, passing over that letter, I come down a little further in the same page, and find a letter addressed to the purser of the "Ovalau," 14th August, 1895. That was several months before, and it reads as follows: "If Wilson can satisfy you that he was a member of the Foresters before he joined the company's service he need not join our society, but if he cannot do this enrol him at once." Was that letter also sent without authority?—Certainly it was.

351. And all those letters of a similar character?—Yes.

352. Then, you are a member of the committee of the society which presents this report, and which, in setting out these letters, fails to say they were sent without authority, and then goes on to say this, referring to the letters: "These all go to show that there has been no attempt, either directly or indirectly, to debar members of other societies from joining the service or to compel those who are members of other societies to join this one." But there is nothing to repudiate the request as regards persons who were not members of other societies. It does not in any way disclaim the letters requiring those who were not members of other societies to join?—That is so.

353. That report was agreed to by your committee?—That is the address, is it not?

354. It is headed the annual report?—Yes; but that is the chairman's address.

355. But at the same meeting at which that was presented there was no disclaimer in the report in reference to this pressure?—Absolutely none at all.

356. It was a curious thing, was it not, when all this took place, and the report was presented to the society—and it must have been known that this matter was going to be discussed—that the committee made no reference to it, or denied responsibility?—None. It is not the committee's report. I can explain this to you. This meeting was held on Saturday, the 5th, and all that was done was the passing of the committee's report and the balance-sheet, and the general meeting had to be postponed till the Monday following. We had absolutely no idea what our chairman (Mr. Mills) was going to lay before the members. This is our report. We had not been aware of these other things.

357. *Mr. Fisher.*] That was not all that was done. There were one or two nice speeches?—Yes, on the second day.

358. *Hon. Major Steward.*] You yourself spoke, and did not disclaim the fact?—Yes; and I do not disclaim it now.

359. Except that you say all the letters were sent without authority?—I distinctly say that all these letters in which our secretary has apparently used any pressure have been, so far as I know, written without the consent of the committee and without the consent of the Union Company.

360. *Mr. Fisher.*] Then all that, instead of being withdrawn, was printed in sheet form, and circulated throughout the country?—I know nothing about that.

361. *Hon. Major Steward.*] As a member of the committee, what is your view with regard to registration?—I disapprove; so far as a seafaring man I do.

362. Suppose that under the authority of a special Act dealing with this society it were possible to register this particular set of rules, would you or would you not consider it an advantage to have your rules protected and enforceable by law?—I do not think it would do any good.

363. As regards the representation of the contributors on the governing body of the society, is it a fair thing, seeing that the company contributes one-fifth of the revenue and the men four-fifths, that the company should be represented by fully one-half—practically a little more than half—of the governing body? Would it not have been fairer that the representation on the governing body should be adjusted in proportion to the contributions?—I do not see that any good results can be got from that. We would get so complicated in the matter. Seafaring people are so different to shore people. The men are on board ship, and how are you to place others on the committee without inconveniencing the ship to some extent?

364. You could reduce the company's representation without reducing your own?—I consider that the representation, so far as the Union Company is concerned, is fair. You must understand me when I say that the nominees of the company are not officials of the company. Some of them are members of the benefit society.

365. Then, you are satisfied with the present representation?—Yes.

366. *Mr. Fisher.*] You said you objected to the registration of the society?—Yes.

JOHN NICOL MILNE was examined on oath.

367. *The Chairman.*] What is your business?—A.B. on the "Te Anau."

368. If you wish to make a statement, just tell us what you desire to say?—Well, as regards the society, I have been a member from the start—within six months of its formation. I was in the "Talune" at the time it started. They never asked me to join till six months afterwards. They called the crew into the smoking-room of the "Talune" to see if we were in favour of joining the society.

369. *Mr. Fisher.*] Who called you?—Mr. Ness and Mr. Kirby. They said we would not be compelled to join, and that we would not be thrown out of employment. Three months' grace was