

society. A thoroughly competent actuary in Wellington is now going into the accounts." How long would it take to prepare such a report?—Well, Mr. Leslie was then receiving the different items of information from the society, but it was not for about three months after that date that all the information was supplied.

92. Have you supplied all the information?—I have supplied it all now, and but for Mr. Leslie's illness since then his report would have been to hand by this time. I think he was laid up for about a month.

93. *The Chairman.*] We were informed by Mr. McEwan that the Registrar of Friendly Societies would not register the society on account of its weakness—viz., that he did not consider the contributions of the men sufficient to pay the benefits they were supposed to receive. Now, Mr. McEwan was in error in stating that the Registrar would have refused?—I think so. I think I am right in saying that the Registrar of Friendly Societies has no power to interfere in the financial matters of any society, or to regulate their scale of contributions; he has power to object or to advise as to any of the rules they make.

94. Now, Mr. Grater, you have a good deal to do with friendly societies, and I have no doubt you have read the reports of the Registrar of Friendly Societies from time to time: have you ever noticed that he has continually brought under the notice of the Government the point that a great many friendly societies are on a false actuarial basis?—Oh, yes; I know that quite well. It is the rule with friendly societies rather than the exception.

95. They find that the Registrar of Friendly Societies does not consider they are on a sound actuarial basis?—The majority of them.

96. If that is the case in regard to registered friendly societies, which give smaller benefits than the Union Company's benefit society, the latter giving surrender value and so on, does it not lead one to suspect that the Union Company's benefit society would be—I speak as a layman—found in a worse position than an ordinary benefit society, since the contributions of the men are smaller and the benefits are larger?—If the contributions are sufficient the question of payment of surrender value would not affect the position one way or the other.

97. That was not the question. We have been informed they are lower in this society, and that that is one of the benefits—that the contributions are lower and the benefits greater than in registered benefit societies; in fact, Mr. McEwan said this was the attraction to the men—that rather than compelling the men to join the society it was rushed, and they had to limit the membership?—That was so before I joined the society.

98. Is it your opinion that the society would be better if it was registered?—In what way? What do you mean by better?

99. Would it be more satisfactory to the members if it was registered—that is to say, if the rules were legalised?—There are many things to be taken into consideration as to the society being registered. I presume it would then lose the benefit of the Union Company's help.

100. Why?—Unless, of course—which I think doubtful—the Revising Barrister sanctioned the company having some say in the management; and if the company contributes and receives no benefits and the members contribute and receive benefits surely it is only fair that the company should have some say in it.

101. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Suppose the rules receive the sanction of the law by special legislation, would you not be in a better position by being able to enforce your rules in Court?—Oh, decidedly.

102. In regard to losing the company's contribution, will you turn to Rule 47 in reference to that. This society was formed in 1891?—Yes.

103. By that rule the company is bound to contribute for the period of five years, which have now expired?—Yes.

104. Now, it is entirely at the option of the company whether it continues to pay that or not, so that the registration would not affect that question?—No.

105. *Mr. Fisher.*] You belong to the Oddfellows?—Yes.

106. Would you prefer that your lodge, instead of being a registered society, should be an unregistered society?—Oh, certainly not.

107. *The Chairman.*] Will you tell us, Mr. Grater, since I spoke about legalising the rules by registration, and the status you consider these rules have at the present time, what is their value as they now stand?—I cannot give a legal opinion on the matter.

108. You know, as an Oddfellow, that your rules have some value, but you cannot speak as to the value of these rules?—I cannot.

109. *Mr. Fisher.*] There is one point I have not referred to. I would have referred to it during the evidence of Mr. Bracegirdle, but as his evidence was not altogether satisfactory to me I did not mention the point. People speak of the benefits to the men conferred by the existence of this benefit society, and refer to the generosity of the Union Company in connection with it, but it appears to me not to be known that the Union Company has not paid, under the Shipping and Seamen's Act, anything to the men: it has not conformed to its legal obligations under this Act and its amendments: it professes to do good to the men out of this society, and out of the men's own money, saving its own pocket by means of this society?—I do not think your remarks call for an answer from me. They are evidently addressed to the reporters.

110. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Are you aware how this money is paid or collected? That is to say, assuming a man has been enrolled in your society, he is paid his wage on board monthly. Now, what happens? Is he paid the amount he has earned less the amount he owes to the benefit society?—Not that I am aware of.

111. Or is he paid in full, and left to pay his contribution when called upon?—That is the instruction of the company to the pursers—that they are on no account to deduct money from the wages, but to pay in full.