

this money was given to them it would enable them to deal more effectually with the persons suffering as I have mentioned, and money could be appropriated in that direction to help them.

64. *Hon. Mr. Beehan.*] Your society in New South Wales is a very large one?—Yes.

65. Could you state the number of members?—I think, somewhere near forty thousand.

66. Your society takes advantage of the Subvention Act in New South Wales?—Yes.

67. Could you give us any idea from your communications with them what they think of the scheme in New South Wales?—Their opinion is that it is a very good thing, and it has met with their approval.

68. And you are aware also that the scheme is not a costly one—only costing 2s. 4d. per head for adults?—Yes, that is a cheap scheme.

69. I think you are also aware that it was established by the Registrar, who is also actuary, through lecturing the societies?—Yes; he went round to the different societies and addressed the members, and pointed out the advantages, and, if I mistake not, there was an impression that they would be penalized unless some provision was made. The scale of contributions was held out as an inducement, and that if the scheme was approved of their position would be improved.

70. You are aware also that it was principally to stop the lapses or secessions from the societies, especially amongst the old people up to 65 years of age?—Yes.

71. Has it accomplished that in New South Wales?—It has reduced them, and with the aid of consolidation they have been able to meet all those claims and convert their large deficiency into a surplus. It has also enabled them to reduce the contributions of members, and so improve their position in that way.

72. Supposing Lloyd George's scheme were brought out here, how do you think the cost of it would compare with a subvention scheme?—That is a question I have not looked into.

73. You are, of course, aware that the subvention scheme is taken up by all the societies with the exception of one in New South Wales?—Yes, that is so.

74. They did not do so at first?—No, there was some opposition to it.

75. You heard Mr. Hayes say that there was a Government proposal for New Zealand, and that the cost would be something like £15,000?—Yes.

76. On the lines of the New South Wales scheme of 2s. 4d. per head of mesne adult membership of friendly societies, evidently that is about twice more than the friendly societies could expect comparing it with New South Wales. If there are 164,000 members of friendly societies there, our adult population of friendly societies would be reduced proportionately with New South Wales. According to that scheme, should not the cost be about £7,000 at 2s. 4d. per head?—That is if the Government would work this scheme of subvention on the lines of the New South Wales scheme? I cannot answer that. In matters of that kind I have such great confidence in our Actuary that I would not think of questioning his calculations.

77. I am sorry you do not like the National Provident scheme?—I said I did not like that portion of it which came into competition with friendly societies. The point is that according to the last report the increase in the members of friendly societies has only been 2·20, as against 3·67 the year before.

78. Had the National Provident Fund anything to do with that?—I believe it had.

79. In what way?—In the way I have already explained. It has had the effect of securing a good proportion of members who would otherwise have been drafted into the friendly societies.

80. You mean young people?—Yes.

81. Have they taken any out of your society?—I understand that in Napier they have felt it fairly keenly; but as I already said, I have no figures to prove it in regard to Wellington. I do not come very closely in contact with the lodge work in that direction, but in the higher branch.

82. You have laid it down that, as the National Provident Fund is subsidized to the extent of 25 per cent. of the contributions, the friendly societies have an undoubted claim to subvention from the Government?—I think so, on those lines.

83. And do you believe also that they should pay a subsidy to old persons at 65 to help them in sickness and funeral expenses?—There is provision made for old age, but I do not see that that enters into our work at all. As the Government have already said they are going to do the work of subvention on the same lines and on the same terms as that in force in New South Wales, when they have done that, that is as much as they can be asked to do.

84. You are aware that in the case of a small lodge, two or three persons continuously on the sick-fund would pretty well wipe it out?—That is where the advantage of consolidation of sick-funds would come in.

85. If the Government came to the assistance of the friendly societies, would it not help those small lodges materially in the case of those old persons of 65 years of age who continue on the sick-fund?—Yes, considerably.

86. Of course, although the societies are actuarially sound, some of them have a great number of people of 65 years of age and over, and that is the reason that you would not like differentiation on the lines of the question put by Mr. Luke that a lodge actuarially sound should not ask for such a thing as this?—Yes, certainly. I believe that all the societies should be treated alike in respect to their older members, independent of whether they are in a sound financial position or in a deficiency.

87. Do you think it a good thing that the Government should subsidize the societies for old-age people to their sick and funeral fund?—Yes, I do.

88. Do you think it would be a good thing if Mr. Hayes and Mr. Traversi took a tour through the principal towns of the Dominion and addressed the members of the friendly societies?—On what lines?