

ordinary benefit to that of an annuity. I would, however, in conclusion, emphasize the fact that we ought to be relieved of this inequitable competition which has come in. We did not anticipate that this competition would be so keen, and as I have already said we have no desire to stay any movement that would tend to thrift, and provide reasonable assistance for those who are unable to provide for themselves. But when it comes to entering into competition for young lives, and, as Mr. McLeod has emphasized, subsidizing those who are able to pay, then we thought we had just cause for complaint, and we hope we may get some redress, because we believe that we can still do the work that we set out to do, and do it much better and more effectually than it has been done by the National Provident Fund.

3. *Mr. Dickson.*] I take it that your principal objection to the National Provident Fund is the activity of the canvassers in inducing young men to join?—That is so.

4. You concede, I presume, that it is a good thing for every young man to join a friendly society or to provide in some other way for his old age?—Without doubt.

5. Supposing the Provident Fund were done away with entirely, will the friendly societies undertake to exercise the same activity in getting these men to join the friendly societies as has been exercised by the canvassers of the Provident Fund?—If it comes within their financial power to do so; but when they are asked to put their hands in their pockets to pay for that as against a fund that is subsidized by the State, you will realize it has a disheartening effect. I might point out that the funds of friendly societies are so rigidly guarded, and rightly so, that we cannot trespass on the benefit fund for anything that is in connection with the management and propaganda work, so that there is no provision made when the tables of contribution are drawn up by the actuary, or under the Act, other than for sick-benefits and funeral benefits. The management expenses, of course, have to come out of our own pockets— or anything that we do to increase the cost of management has to come out of our own pockets. The only thing we can do to assist the management fund is by careful investment to so increase the funds as to get a surplus, and then at the end of each quinquennial period if we realize a surplus we are permitted to appropriate a certain portion of that surplus for management purposes. And that is the only means we have in our own hands to make provision for management, and it leads us to be careful in our investments.

6. *Mr. Bollard.*] Would the friendly societies accept members the same as the Provident Fund does—the same class of people?—In what way: without passing a doctor? No, certainly not.

7. People who cannot get into your societies can get into the Provident Fund?—Well, if the National Provident Fund dealt with those people only you would never have heard a word from the friendly societies. It is the duty of the State to assist such people, but it could not for a moment be expected that the friendly societies could take persons of that kind. We have to provide for sickness and funeral benefits, but I quite agree with the State making provision for those who are not eligible for friendly societies, and I may say that at the outset of the National Provident Fund I think we were under that impression, not that we were going to have competition of the kind which has come by means of lecturers and canvassers. We should be quite willing for the Government to provide for those who are ineligible for friendly societies, and leave us to work amongst the eligible young men.

8. You think the National Provident Fund should receive those whom you refuse?—I think if the Government choose to make provision for such we should encourage it.

9. You think the Government should make provision for them?—I think the Government should assist them.

10. And only accept those you refuse?—If they will set up a fund at all. We are not decrying the fund so far as that is concerned.

11. *The Chairman.*] You did not object when the Bill was before the House?—No; we did not anticipate that it was to be worked on the lines it has been; otherwise there would have been some very strong objections.

#### THOMAS FATHERS examined. (No. 4.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you, Mr. Fathers?—I am district secretary of the Independent Order of Rechabites. The constituency I represent extends to Gisborne on the one side and New Plymouth on the other side of the North Island, and down to the Bluff. We are shut out of the Auckland District on this occasion. I am very pleased to have the privilege of being present at the Committee to-day. I was present at the meetings of the other Committee that was set up, and personally I am in favour of the National Fund. I think the only real solution of this difficulty is a national scheme. But, sir, at present we have not reached that stage in the Dominion yet. We will probably some day, but if the Provident Fund is to continue with its propaganda work, and its management, as hitherto, and the friendly societies are not helped in any way, there are very dark days ahead of the friendly-society movement. I am very pleased to give evidence here to-day, because my views are somewhat different from those expressed by the other speakers. I believe that if the State subsidized the friendly societies we would be in a position to reduce our contributions and offer more attractive benefits, and could sail along with the National Provident Fund. If it is thought advisable by the State to continue that fund—I assume that the National Provident Fund's operations have gone so far that it has come to stay, and if it has come to stay, well, it is our business to place before Parliament our views upon the question. I think that if subvention was given to friendly societies we might be able to work along, and give the National Provident Fund a good field. That would have to be done in a liberal way by the State. It has been very ably pointed out what the societies have done and what they are doing. The machinery of the different friendly societies is of such a