

247. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Notwithstanding they were discharged?—It does not matter two pins. In fact, I think it is a good thing for young fellows to join some society, because they do not belong to any other society; and it is better to join one where they get £1 a week when they are off work sick. We all know the company is bound to supply a man with physic at any port he goes into; but, apart from that, I believe the company always has been liberal enough to supply a man with pay, and do other things for his comfort.

248. *Mr. Fisher.*] You belong to both a friendly society and the Union Company's society. Now, in regard to this compulsory joining of the society, is there or is there not any feeling of discontent amongst the men on board the ships because of being compelled to join the Union Company's benefit society?—I do not think there is just now; but there was at one time, to the best of my knowledge.

249. Now, have you ever heard by word of mouth from anybody on board your ship, or by letter or by circular, of the intention of the Union Company to abandon all part in the management of the benefit society, and leave it to the men entirely?—I have not heard anything about it.

250. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Have you ever received any intimation, either verbal or written, to the effect that, either from now or from a very near date, the rule as to its being compulsory to join this society will be done away with altogether, and that the matter will be left purely optional?—No; neither written nor otherwise. I did at one time try to get out of it.

251. *Mr. Fisher.*] I ask this question for this reason: that this morning the Commission was informed that was the intention of the Union Company—to leave the entire management to the seamen themselves. In case we may have misunderstood what was said this morning, there is this statement in the newspaper (although we should not take any notice of what appears in the Press, because it is not official)—Have you received the intimation, by word of mouth, circular, or letter, that “the company has intimated its intention of doing at the end of September that which all along it expressed its intention to do—retire from all participation in the management as soon as the society could go alone, and make it then a purely voluntary association like any other friendly society”? You say you have heard nothing to that effect?—I have heard nothing.

252. The previous witness said the same thing?—I have not heard anything of it.

253. *The Chairman.*] When you are paying your monthly subscription to the Union Company's society do you pay it in cash?—I pay it in cash to the purser.

254. He never marks it off in the books?—Certainly not. You pay it across the counter. I have been in the habit always of doing that.

255. When you joined the society did you go through any medical examination?—Yes.

256. You never heard of any man being admitted without that medical examination?—Not that I am aware of.

257. Did you ever hear complaints amongst the men, especially the single men, about their having to join this society at all?—Certainly I have.

258. Now, you are a very good witness for us, because you belong to both sides, and, consequently, can be expected to give a fair answer to this question. I want to know whether you consider an unregistered society like the Union Company's society occupies as good a position as a registered society, like the Oddfellows, for instance?—No; I do not think so. That is my humble opinion.

259. Then, if an unregistered society is of less advantage to a man, according to your opinion, than a registered one, a man who was compelled to join one of the former societies would be put at a disadvantage?—I would put it this way: Say you receive two guineas a week. Well, you can afford to join the Oddfellows' society, for instance, to which you would pay 5s. per month. Then, if you were asked to join another society in order to get employment that would mean 10s. a month, and you would derive no more benefit. You would think 10s. a greater hardship than 5s.

260. Of course, you did not join quite voluntarily; you joined because you want work?—It is this way: In this case I did belong to the Oddfellows, and I belonged also to the A.M.P. Society. I stated my case before Mr. Ness and Mr. Kirby, and they said, “You had better join the company's society.” Well, I thought, myself, it will be another £1 a week in case I am sick or incapacitated, and I said, “Well, it does not matter; it is only 5s. a month more, and it is like paying it into the bank—laying up a store for possible accidents—and £2 a week and doctor's attendance would be very good.”

261. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Do you know if there is any limit of age?—I think so.

262. I mean as regards the Union Company's society; do they take in all their employés irrespective of their age?—I do not think so. There is a chap called Cummock; they would not take him; of course, he is too old.

263. *Mr. Fisher.*] The difficulty we have in dealing with witnesses is this: All you men come here, as we believe, with the desire to give the Commission the best information you can, but even having that desire you make contradictory statements to us—all in good faith, no doubt. One witness says he has never known of pressure being brought to bear to compel men to join the benefit society; you say you objected to join but were overruled?—That is correct; if I had liberty to speak, perhaps I could enlighten you and show that that man's statement was not what you would call accurate.

264. *Hon. Major Steward:* It may be pointed out that the statement of the witness does not contradict the previous statement. He merely says he is not aware of it.

*Witness:* That is so.

265. *Mr. Fisher.*] I understand you to say this: that there is, for a reason, a difficulty in getting accurate information from you men?—I do not think so.

266. Am I right in supposing that there is a difficulty in getting accurate information on these questions?—Not that I am aware of.