

measure, and the very registration of which would, therefore, be in the nature of a guarantee that they are organizations of a satisfactory character in which the members may safely put confidence.

In view of the fact that the objections hitherto taken in certain quarters to the existence of these societies are founded largely upon the belief that compulsion is exercised by the employer upon the employé, your Commissioners are pleased to be able to report that the largest of the societies, which in their rules avowedly made membership compulsory, have repealed this rule, and that in only one or two instances do they find the principle of compulsion enforced by rule. Upon the question as to whether it is or is not desirable that there should be power given to such societies to compel all employés to join, your Commissioners have met with wide differences of opinion. On the one hand it has been shown that in the absence of such a provision a part of the employés, in some instances, stand out and thus weaken the power of the society to provide the benefits contemplated; but, this fact notwithstanding, the large preponderance of opinion on the part of witnesses is that it is not desirable to give the power to a majority of employés, however large, to compel the adhesion of the minority. Your Commissioners concur in this view, and may point out that, were it proposed to confer upon a majority of the employés a power of compulsion in respect to the minority, such compulsion could not be exercised without calling in the assistance of the employer—in a word, it would be necessary to give effect to such compulsion *to compel the employer to compel*. This is, on the face of it, an impracticable state of things, since, all the employés being subject to the control of the employer, the latter, if disinclined to concur with the wish of the majority of his workpeople, may elect to discharge those very employés rather than carry out their wish as regards the compulsion of the minority. Your Commissioners, therefore, have to recommend that it be a condition of registration that the rules of the society shall not contain any compulsory provision.

As regards compulsion on the part of the employer, while, as will be seen by the above, only in one or two instances is compulsion provided for by rule (and even in those cases it has been stated in evidence that the rule is not always enforced), yet it is alleged that a species of compulsion is exercised in that the employés are permitted to understand that preference of employment, other things being equal, will be accorded to those who comply with the employer's wish by joining the benefit society. That is a point to which your Commissioners direct special attention. It is one that raises wide issues, and requires very careful consideration, inasmuch as such a state of things would appear to be an interference with the liberty of the subject by the imposition of conditions such as should not attach to any employment. The question of how to provide against the exercise of a choice on the part of employers in favour of employés who are willing to accept such conditions is an exceedingly difficult one, as such a choice is exercised without restraint or hindrance in other directions, as, for example, in regard to the nationality and even religion of the employé; and it is hard to see how a state of things which your Commissioners perceive to be evil can be remedied. They, however, are bound to represent that a large number of witnesses regard the existence of such conditions as a grievance, and there is no matter in connection with the investigations of the Commission upon which there is a more general consensus of opinion that some remedy is needed if it be possible for a remedy to be found.

As one of the matters which came under investigation, your Commissioners have now to refer to certain representations made as to the effect upon registered friendly societies of the existence and operation of private benefit societies. The contention has been advanced that the latter are inimical to the former, and that the result of the existence of the private societies has been to restrict and deplete the membership of the friendly societies, in that members of those societies have left them and ceased to be members because of their being required or persuaded to join the private societies; and, further, that persons who would have become members of the friendly societies were it not for the existence of the private societies have joined the latter. In connection with this branch of the inquiry, your Commissioners report that they find but very