

4. Have you had any practical evidence of men leaving any of the lodges in order to join any such private benefit society?—No; I do not know personally of any men having left lodges. I have heard of them having left on account of not being able to keep up their contributions to both societies.

5. You heard of them on good authority?—Yes.

6. What, in your eyes, is the worst point in regard to private benefit societies as compared with friendly societies?—Well, I think the fact of them being in a manner compulsory is a bad point; and, then, the fact of them not being registered helps to work against the societies that are registered.

7. In what way?—Registered societies have certain conditions to comply with which un-registered societies have not.

8. In regard to the distribution of the funds?—Yes; in our friendly society the moneys are divided into two funds—the sick fund and management fund; and, according to the Friendly Societies Act, we must not touch the sick fund for any management expenses; it has to be kept by itself.

9. Then, is there not some rule in a friendly society as to the manner in which the funds are invested?—In a friendly society the funds are invested, by order of the society, by the trustees, and they can only be invested on first mortgage, Government debentures, or on deposit in the Post Office or other savings-banks.

10. Are these investments regulated by the will of the trustees or are they submitted to the Registrar of Friendly Societies?—Yes; the Registrar has a return sent to him every year showing how the funds are disposed of and how invested.

11. You consider that a safeguard?—Certainly.

12. Then, again, I suppose registration of the rules gives fixity to the rules, and in a sense there is security also in that?—Yes; while the management of the friendly society is in the hands of members, without any outside interference at all. Of course, in private benefit societies, as a rule, some members of the firm are on the board of management.

13. But they are not allowed in any way to have too large a representation on the committee, or to in any way influence the affairs more than any other members?—It is true, I think, they have an undoubted influence.

14. Even in a friendly society?—No; in a private benefit society. In a friendly society all men stand on the same footing.

15. But you consider the main point in a friendly society is that the men join of their own free-wills, while in a private benefit society they are, to some extent, either directly or indirectly compelled to join?—Certainly. I think in a great many cases in connection with private benefit societies there is a certain amount of compulsion. In friendly societies men join of their own free-wills.

16. Compulsion being, in your eyes, a necessity to getting employment?—Yes.

17. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Then, your opinion is that the contention as to the alleged clashing of these private benefit societies with the friendly societies rests upon the assumption that an employer requires an employé to join his benefit society, whether or not that employé is a member of a friendly society?—Yes.

18. Well, now, in cases where it is specially provided that an employé, if a member of a registered friendly society, is not required to join the benefit society, would the benefit society clash at all with a friendly society?—If a private benefit society were registered it would be a different thing.

19. But in a case where it is specially provided that an employé may, if he so pleases, be a member of a friendly society instead of being a member of the benefit society, the latter society would not clash with a registered society?—No.

20. Well, then, the reason why you would still object to the existence of such societies, the membership of which was optional, is, I understand, because these societies are not registered?—Yes.

21. And you conceive that the benefit of registration is that there is more security to the men who join, in that their funds have to be invested in a manner prescribed by law?—That is one point.

22. And the other, that the rules in their case are more permanent?—Certainly.

23. That is to say, they cannot be so readily altered?—Yes; of course, the rules of a friendly society cannot be altered unless at a special meeting called for that purpose, and of which notice has been given.

24. I suppose you are aware that a good many private benefit societies are in existence?—Yes.

25. Well, now, what is your view with regard to legislation? Do you think it would be desirable that there should be special legislation to deal with these societies, providing for their registration and the registration of their rules under certain safeguards?—Certainly. Of course, I think they should be registered in the same manner as other societies. I do not think it would be wise to have a number of the employers on the board of management.

26. Would you be of the same opinion if you knew that the employers contributed—in some instances very considerably—towards the funds of the private benefit societies? Would you not think it fair that the employer so contributing should have a representation in proportion to the amount of his contribution?—Well, I am of opinion that these private benefit societies are formed principally to give employers a hold over the men, and the fact of an employer contributing would be, in a manner, to his own benefit. I am of the same opinion whether employers contribute or not—that they should not be on the board of management.

27. You say an employer should not be?—No.