

44. The fund is terminable, ending every year?—Not quite so.

45. Except as to a small balance; but as that balance is always carried forward you practically close the accounts every year?—I do not think so. There is always a sum to be carried forward to commence the year with.

46. I understand that; but if there were £8 from last year, and the same sum next year, and the year after, leaving that floating sum in abeyance, the accounts are practically terminated yearly?—Yes.

47. Then, as your fund consists of the subscriptions of the men, *plus* the subsidy of the firm, after deducting from that the amounts paid out in the way of sick-allowances, you arrive at a certain balance?—That is so.

48. Then, of that balance you carry forward a fixed amount as a nucleus for next year's funds, and you divide the remainder?—That is so.

49. You divide it in two moieties, one going to the firm and the other moiety being divided amongst the men *pro rata*?—That is it exactly.

50. You are perfectly sure there is no attempt at control on the part of the firm?—I can swear to that, and the other men will back me up in that.

51. *Mr. Fisher.*] Is it entirely a misconception of the position to say that men are not required to join the society, or that men in the employ can withdraw from the society if they please?—I do not think so; it is a fact, nevertheless.

52. Read your first rule?—I notice that; but it is nevertheless a fact what I state to you. The men can do what they think about it. We have proof of it; men have not joined, and no man has ever been discharged. They can be in the society or out of it.

53. I will put this to you: Is it the practice of the firm to have the men's contributions to the society deducted from their wages every month by the cashier?—That is so.

54. Well, there is nothing voluntary about that?—They can join the society or stop out of it.

55. If they are not members their money is not deducted?—That is so; we have proof of it. We have men in the place who are not members of the society.

56. If that is so, then this rule is entirely nugatory?—Yes; I do not think it is in force. It cannot be in force; but, as I tell you, I have not read these rules, although they have been up for nine years. Everything goes on so quietly; there is the usual monthly meeting, and any one attends. The secretary has to account to the cashier for all moneys taken out. He reads over the balance to the satisfaction of those who choose to be present. If the employés are satisfied the firm is satisfied.

57. However little the interest the firm may take in respect to the affairs of the society themselves, the deduction is made by the cashier?—That is so.

58. *Hon. Major Steward.*] In respect to the men who are members, but not in respect to the men who are not?—Yes.

59. *Mr. Fisher.*] What are the names of the men who do not contribute to the society?—There is Tinnock, storeman; Sunderland, clerk; Hampstead, clerk in the office; Jamieson, the firm's secretary; and there is Macfarlane, a labourer working about the factory. The latter is the man I referred to who wished to withdraw so as not to be a burden on the funds.

60. These five men are mostly clerks, except the storeman and labourer?—I explained why they are not in the society. These men are usually paid when they are off sick; their salaries are not interfered with. But, in the case of Macfarlane, if he is laid up his wages are stopped, and that makes all the difference.

61. Why was the society established?—It is called the mutual benefit society, by which the men assist each other in sickness, and the firm supports it by paying one-half the revenue.

62. I suppose it is useless to ask you if it is any part of the articles of McLeod Brothers' Association to establish a society of this sort?—I do not know. My part of the business is manager of the works, not of the office.

63. *The Chairman.*] Does this society offer better inducements to the men than any ordinary society, such as the Foresters or Druids?—As they get money out again every year, it is a greater inducement, although I may tell you for a fact that the greater number belong to outside societies, such as the Foresters, Temperance, and Oddfellows. I think I may safely say that the majority of them belong to friendly societies independently of our society.

64. Do you belong to any registered society besides?—I do not.

65. To this one only?—It is not for a matter of money that I am in it. If I were ill my salary would go on. It is simply a matter of sociability. I have been laid up, but I have not taken one penny out of the funds.

66. *Mr. Fisher.*] The majority of the men belong to outside friendly societies, but all, except the five in the factory, belong to this private benefit society?—Yes. I am not sure. There may be some more, but these I know of.

67. Can you offer any reason why these men, who belong to outside friendly societies, are compelled—it is compulsory under the rules—to belong to this society?—The rule ought to be smashed up. They are not compelled, as the men will tell you. That rule was made nine years ago.

68. Still, as you say, the deduction is made at the pay-table by the cashier?—Some one must take it. It is easier to take their contributions there than for each man to go to the secretary with his 3d. or 6d. every week.

69. *The Chairman.*] In spite of the Truck Act?—I do not think we bother about the Truck Act.

70. *Hon. Major Steward.*] You say distinctly that, notwithstanding the existence of Rule 1, any person who objected to this amount being deducted could have his wages paid in full, as no man is obliged to be a member of the society?—That is so; nothing is more free in Dunedin either in regard to joining or leaving that society.