

93. These rules are stuck up in the factory?—There is a copy in the shop, on the walls, but I could not say if they are an exact copy of the rules.

94. *Hon. Major Steward.*] I think you said one reason why you preferred to be a member of this society as against joining an ordinary friendly society was that you get a refund at the end of the year?—Yes; and that I could not afford to join another society.

95. *Mr. Fisher.*] Is there any rule relating to a division of the funds at the end of each year?—It says so in the copy of the rules; there has always been a dividend every year since I have been employed there.

96. You are a member of the society, and surely ought to know?—I have been satisfied with the thing.

97. I want to know if there is a rule relating to the periodical division of the funds?—Not having read the rules, I cannot say. I do not know. I am satisfied with the society, and I think I am voicing the opinions of the men, who all look upon it favourably.

JOHN WILLIAM MILNES was examined on oath.

98. *The Chairman.*] What is your profession?—I am manager of the Phoenix Company (Limited).

99. You have been in the Phoenix Company some time?—Two years.

100. You have, I believe, a benefit society attached to the firm?—We have.

101. Have you a copy of the rules?—Yes. [Exhibit 13.]

102. Speaking generally does this society of yours work successfully?—Yes, quite so.

103. The men do not feel the compulsory clause at all?—I have never heard any objection to it. There has been no objection on the part of any one in the employ at the present time. I think there have at different times been certain cases in which new beginners did not pay, but there is nothing of the kind existing at the present time. There may have been something of the kind at one time, but not now. Some little girl or two did not like to pay the 2d. per week. It may help to give you an idea of the general result if I present this abstract of what the society has done since it commenced. [Exhibit 14.] You will see I have extended the contributions of the employés up to February of this year.

104. *Hon. Major Steward.*] What is the total number of members?—I cannot say. It is the same as the number of employés in the factory, and varies between ninety and a hundred and twenty; it averages about a hundred members.

105. Now, in connection with Rule 5 and Rule 27, which seem to be more stringent, which require every employé to be a member, I just wish to ask one question: Suppose a member, after he has joined the society, refuses to continue his payments—I see that the wages are paid in full, and that the contributions are not deducted—what would follow? Would he be discharged?—I have never been called upon to consider that question seriously.

106. I put the question because the rules seem to me to mean that a law without a penalty is no law?—The rule governs the society; it does not govern the management of the company.

107. I want to get at the force of the rule. If the rule is simply made by the society, and it is optional or otherwise with the employers to enforce it, then the rule ceases to be a rule—it is simply a voluntary agreement. The rule says, "All employés shall be obliged to join." I want to know the extent of that obligation. Would the company go the length of saying, "It is a condition of our employment, and if you do not like that condition you are not obliged to stay here"?—I cannot say.

108. Has any case occurred?—No; no case has occurred in which an employé has been discharged for not belonging to the society, so far as I know. Neither has there been a case in which an employé has persistently refused to join the society, nor has there been a case where the management of the company have had to say, "You shall have to join."

109. *Mr. Fisher.*] Is this not the case: that under these rules such a question cannot arise?—Oh, no; I would not say that.

110. Well, look at Rule 5 and Rule 27: such a question cannot arise as to a man having any option?—According to the constitution of the society, apparently he must join.

111. *Hon. Major Steward.*] I want to get at the case of a man who has joined the society and been in for a year, and who discontinues paying his contributions: the money is not deducted from his wages; what, then, follows?—I am not going to say what will happen. I have never been called upon to judge during my experience as manager of the factory. I cannot say what engagements were entered into between the company and the employés at the time the society was formed. I do not know if the then manager said, "If you do not join the society I will discharge you." The point has never cropped up in my time.

112. You are manager of the company, and you do not know?—The rules do not govern me. I should do as I thought fit under the circumstances. Probably I should look at it from this point of view: that the society is a club of good-fellowship amongst the employés themselves.

113. I am not objecting to the society?—It is a certain club of good-fellowship and common interest amongst the employés themselves, and if any employé persistently refused to join the society, and that were represented to me, I should perhaps feel that the employé, whoever he was, was not making himself cordial with his fellow-employés, and not entering into the *esprit de corps* of the concern, and if it came to a decision as to which of two men should be kept on if times were slack the one who refused to join the society might be the one to suffer. I do not say that would happen.

114. I see by Rule 14 that provision is made for non-benefit members, who can become officers; that is, I suppose, members of committee?—Yes.

115. Suppose they were not members of committee, and there was a considerable number of these non-benefit members, would they be allowed to vote at the ordinary meetings of the society the same as benefit members?—I imagine they would.