

116. *Mr. Fisher.*] Where are the non-benefit members to come from?—From the official staff—the clerical staff—although there is no one but myself.

117. *Hon. Major Steward.*] They are not of sufficient number, I presume, to outnumber the working staff?—No.

118. The whole of the office put together would not counteract the others?—No; there are not half-dozen.

119. There is one other rule—Rule 29—which says, “No division of any part of the funds of the society shall be made until such time as the funds amounts to £100. Then it goes on to say, “In the event of a division being made, the reserve shall amount to not less than £100.” That would seem to be not quite explicit. There would appear to be nothing to divide up to £100, because £100 must be retained?—There must be a reserve of £100.

120. It is thought advisable to have this reserve?—Yes.

121. Has there been such a division yet?—No; you have the record there.

122. *The Chairman.*] Are many of your people members of friendly societies as well as this one?—I have no idea.

123. It has never been brought to your notice?—No; I do not know whether one is a member of a friendly society.

124. Are you one yourself?—No.

125. Are you an honorary member of this society?—Yes; it is merely owing to my position in the company that I am its president.

126. Would you not draw sick-pay?—I am not entitled to it; I am not a member. Even if the office staff paid 2d. per week they would not be entitled to sick-pay.

127. Does the company, to your knowledge, exercise any control over the committee in the way of expressing wishes, or take any active part in the management of the society?—During my acquaintance with the society the company, as a company, has taken no part whatever, except the interest I have taken myself.

128. It pays this subsidy, and leaves the society to the men to manage?—Yes. I have not looked up the minutes at the time the society was started to see what authority was given to the then manager.

129. Is there any clause in the company's articles of association relating to the formation of a benefit society?—I do not know; I have not looked to see.

130. You cannot say why the benefit society was instituted?—No. I think in all factories working as we do it is found hard to stop a man's wages when he is off work through sickness and accident, and I think the company would find it a relief to continue the man's pay on a lower scale. It provides that a man could not be destitute while out of work.

131. Then, supposing the firm had a very poor workman injured in their service, they would probably have had in the old times, either from good feeling or from public feeling, to see that their workmen did not starve or die from want of medical attendance, and they would probably have had to pay for that workman?—I think all humane people in that position would act in that way.

132. Now they find it is better to form societies, which, at all events, partially help to pay for it?—I would not exactly put it in that way. I have experienced this difficulty myself. I have managed similar manufacturing businesses before, and I have often found it exceedingly difficult to know what to do in cases of this kind, and where to stop; and I find this society is a great relief to me in that respect.

133. How are the contributions taken or received from the people in the employ of the company?—The treasurer, who is one of the employés, collects the contributions.

134. Does he go round and collect from the foremen?—All hands in each department pay to the foremen, and the treasurer collects from the foremen. I do not go into details, but so far as I know that is the way.

135. Who pays the wages?—The office pays the wages.

136. And does each man receive his money from the office?—Every one; the wages of each man is handed to him in a sealed envelope as he leaves the office, and subscriptions are usually not paid in until the day after. We pay on Friday, and I think the subscriptions of the men to the society are paid on Saturday or Monday.

137. And the foreman of each department collects from the men?—I think so. There are a good many about the place, and the treasurer sees that they are paid in.

138. The offices are purely voluntary?—Yes; entirely so.

139. Do you see any objection to this society being registered under the provisions of the Friendly Societies Act?—I do not know sufficient about the legislation relating to friendly societies to say if it would be any advantage to be registered. But if it were registered, and correspondence with the Registrar of Friendly Societies had to be carried on under the pains and penalties of an Act, I think it would be very much more difficult to find officers to undertake the duties without payment. At the present time they take them in turn without any loss to the society, and it is a good training to the men themselves. If brought under an Act, I think we should have to have a paid secretary, which would be a disadvantage to the society. There has been nearly 20 per cent. more sick benefit paid than has been received in contributions from the employés.

140. Of course, the employers have an offset to their contributions in that they are relieved from special aid?—I do not know of the reasons of others. I know that was found to be a great relief by me. I know I found it to be a very difficult thing to avoid acting either unfairly to the employer or unkindly to the employé.

141. *Hon. Major Steward.*] There is no exception in these rules of those who may be secured against sickness and for a death-allowance in a friendly society?—The question has never cropped up.