

52. How do you know that the employers, who have nothing to do with the society in any way, would enforce Rule 3 to the extent of dismissing a man, as you say they would? Upon what grounds do you form the opinion?—Well, of course, the firm practically has nothing to do with the management, which is in the hands of the members, who also elect their own officers. Nevertheless, from the commencement the society was formed with the consent of the firm. The first meeting was called with their consent, and the manager of the factory has been chairman of the society from the commencement. Practically, it is with the consent of the firm that these rules are in existence.

53. What is the meaning of that consent? Surely the employes of any firm could meet at any place in exercise of their rights as citizens?—Certainly. As a matter of fact, the majority of the meetings of the society are held off the premises.

54. Why was the consent of the firm required by the men to form a society of their own? Was it because the men wanted to get the assistance of the firm to make membership compulsory, and to make all employes comply?—Yes. The society originated, so far as I can remember, in consequence of what I might term the more thrifty employes complaining about subscription-lists coming through the factory. These subscription-lists were in consequence of men who never joined any friendly societies, or cared to provide for a rainy day, becoming ill, and then members of friendly societies and others who tried to provide for themselves were asked almost weekly to subscribe their 2s. or 2s. 6d. Of course, the men complained, and suggested that a society such as this should be formed to prevent subscription-lists, inasmuch as it would compel the unthrifty to provide for themselves. These complaints, then, so far as I remember, were communicated to the head of the firm, Mr. Bone, and he consented to a meeting being called. I would not like to say, but I have no doubt that the first notices were written by the management for the men, and put up in various parts of the factory. I do not think the firm were ever asked to give their consent. This simply came about in a sort of mutual way amongst the employes.

55. What I want to get at exactly is this element of compulsion. You say a man who does not join the society would lose his employment. I presume the co-operation, as it were, of the firm was indirectly sought, as you wanted to insure all employes coming under this rule, and therefore you wanted an element of compulsion. I want to know the extent to which the firm holds itself bound to enforce Rule 3 of the society: upon what grounds do you assume or believe that a man would lose his employment? Have you had any such statement from the firm, or from any one representing the firm?—No one has made such a statement.

56. *Mr. Fisher.*] Nevertheless, the feeling exists in the minds of the men?—Yes; it is believed to be so.

57. The fact of the manager being your leading officer, and taking an active part, gives colour to the belief that he would enforce the rule?—Yes.

58. *The Chairman.*] Have you had any case in which this surrender value has been paid?—Yes; numbers of them.

59. What is your opinion on the question of the society being registered? Supposing legislation were introduced which would enable your society to be registered just as it stands, would you have any objection to it?—Certainly not. My own opinion is that if legislation is passed which will enable societies such as this to exist all other societies and their rules should be registered and brought under the supervision of the Government.

60. *Hon. Major Steward.*] In such a case official recognition of such a society would prove to all employes and the general public that it was framed on proper lines?—Yes.

61. A society not within proper lines would not be allowed to exist?—Yes.

62. Supposing there should be an accumulation of funds at any time, does it not occur to you that there would be the further advantage that your society would be known at law, and would be capable of protecting its interests in these funds much more readily than it can now?—Yes. Of course, our society, as you will notice, divides annually. I think any society such as this which accumulates its funds is objectionable, and also any society that provides rules whereby an employe on leaving the service can continue to be a member of the society.

63. How many members are there in your society?—Two hundred and sixty-one.

64. Suppose there were a firm with a society like this attached to it with a thousand members; in such a case there might be £500 instead of £100 lying at credit, and you know that defalcations are possible amongst all classes of societies. Do you not think there would be considerable temptation in connection with a fund of that kind, and that it would be more secure for members were the society registered?—Yes; and I would even go further than that. I think the time will come when the Government will have to compel societies—not societies such as this—to have all their books audited by an authorised Government auditor.

65. *The Chairman.*] I do not see any provision in the rules as to the auditing of these accounts?—They are audited annually by two employes, who are elected by members.

66. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Where is the money kept?—Under the rules it is banked, in the names of Messrs. Bone and the secretary, in the Savings-bank.

67. Is the account operated upon by cheques in the name of these two?—Yes.

68. Is the money put on fixed deposit for any term?—No.

69. *The Chairman.*] Does your society pay for a doctor?—No; there is only the one benefit.

70. It does not affect the wife and family of any employe?—No; practically it is not antagonistic in any way to an ordinary benefit society.

71. In fact, it is almost necessary for a married man to join this society as well as a friendly society?—Certainly; a benefit of 15s. per week is not sufficient in any way.

72. Do you not think that the consent of the firm might also be influenced by the cessation of subscription-lists, owing to sickness of their employes being brought to them as well as to the employes?—I do not think so. Of course, so far as the manager is concerned, he might have the same feelings as ourselves, but he is one of us practically. I do not think they would go to the head