

of the firm with a subscription-list because a man was out of work or suffering from sickness or from an accident. I have a statement here [Exhibit 16] showing the amount of contributions received each year, the expenditure, and the amount divided.

JAMES WARREN PARKINSON was examined on oath.

73. *The Chairman.*] What is your profession?—I am in the warehouse department of the Roslyn Woollen Mills.

74. Have you been long in that service?—Between sixteen and seventeen years.

75. You have a benefit society connected with the works?—Yes.

76. You are the secretary of that society?—Yes; I was one of the promoters of the society, and Mr. Ovens, who has been called to give evidence here, is the other promoter.

77. Have you a copy of the rules?—Yes [Exhibit 17].

78. In your opinion, has the society and its work been satisfactory?—Having had eighteen years' experience in the working of it, I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that it has been successful from beginning to end.

79. Have you brought any statement as to how the funds have worked out, and as to the amount distributed?—You can take a general idea from the last balance-sheet [Exhibit 18]. The society is only in existence for twelve months, and works out at the end of every year; and between the 24th December and the 4th January there is no society. The society is dead and buried at the end of each year.

80. What happens if a member dies on the 25th December?—He would not get his burial-fund.

81. In spite of having paid in for the year?—The dividend has been paid, and the society wound up. Of course, assistance could be given, but it would have to be done by a general vote at a special meeting called for the purpose. We have 364 members, and the amount to be divided at the end of the year has to be apportioned amongst three classes, so to speak. Of course, you cannot exactly divide it to a fraction, so there is always a small balance to carry forward in the event of the society being carried on. In the event of the members deciding not to carry on the society I do not know what would happen to this balance; it would be handed over to some charity perhaps. But it is a very small sum.

82. I presume these two gentlemen who sign are appointed auditors?—Yes. They are members of committee, and, in addition, each member of the committee is bound to audit the accounts at the same time, although they are only signed on behalf of the committee by the two.

83. I notice there is a bonus on behalf of the firm: is that given each year?—There has always been a bonus given by the firm, but they have increased it during the last few years. It was not always as much as £50.

84. *Hon. Major Steward.*] How many members are there in the society, and how many employés in the mills?—I went through my books on Saturday after receiving the summons, and I find there are 364 contributing members.

85. And there is the same number of employés?—Yes.

86. The amount divided was £176: that, I suppose, would not be divided *per capita*, but in proportion to their contributions?—Yes; in proportion to their contributions. There are twenty-five payments of 1s., which is the first class, and twenty-five payments of 6d., and twenty-five payments of 3d. Those in the first class received back at the end of last year £1 1s. 8d., those in the second class half that amount, and those in the third class a fourth.

87. So that the net contributions to the society in respect to the first class were 3s. 4d., in the second class 1s. 8d., and in the third class 10d.?—Yes. This is a good thing for many who are not so thrifty as they might be, for the dividend enables them to carry over the holidays, whereas if the benefit society did not exist the chances are they would not have it—especially the young people.

88. I see Rules 1, 2, and 3 all use the word "shall." I am not at all putting this question in any hostile spirit, but I want to know exactly the scope of that word "shall": what does it mean? Suppose any man declines to pay his contribution, what will happen?—That is a contingency which has never arisen since the society started. As one of the promoters of the society, I may tell you the reasons why I took the thing in hand. Every one was sick of subscription-lists. If it was thought any one was not in a very good pecuniary position—a married man, for instance, with a family—a subscription used to be got up in the mill for him; and it occurred to me that it would be a good thing to start a benefit society. I had known of mills in the Old Country where benefit societies had been established, and I got my idea from that. I thought it would be a good thing for this mill, because it would place the people in an independent position. I wrote a letter to the manager, and I called in the aid of Mr. Ovens, and he signed the letter with me. A meeting of the members in the mills was called, and the society was started by a majority vote. I will not say that at first there was no objection to it. Some half-dozen objected in the first year, but the greatest objectors at first were those most alive to its advantages afterwards, and from that time to this there has never been the slightest question about it, and that "shall" is entirely the result of the members' own vote. I might say the proprietors had nothing whatever to do with the formation of the society; in fact, I believe it was formed before Messrs. Ross and Glendinning really knew anything about it. A voluntary benefit society in connection with the Roslyn Mills would never work at all. I made a calculation before the start with one or two others, and we came to the conclusion that a voluntary society would never answer at all, and therefore the rules were drafted from a copy of a similar society in the Old Country. The members have all along upheld these rules without any dissatisfaction. The money is collected every fortnight without any demur at all. Each member is supplied with a copy of the rules.

89. The members are practically unanimous in supporting it now?—Quite unanimous.

90. How is the money collected?—It is collected by the treasurer, who is the clerk of the mills. Of course, there is another way of collecting it—through the head of each department; but this