

51. *Mr. Fisher.*] How are the subscriptions taken? Do the men pay voluntarily or are the amounts deducted?—They are collected once a fortnight, by myself. I might mention that since I have been a member the subscriptions have twice ceased owing to the funds having arrived at the limit mentioned in the rules.

52. Will you tell us how the entrance-fee is paid?—They pay 2s. down and double rates for thirteen weeks.

53. I did not mean that—I meant the exact manner in which it is paid. Supposing a lad was taken on, and he had not the change in his pocket, would that entrance-fee be deducted from his first pay?—No. We would wait until he received his pay, and I would collect it from him. In no case are the subscriptions deducted from the wages. A number of lads in the office who are earning small wages are not members of the benefit society. Those who are earning wages under 12s. 6d. per week are not members. In fact, a senior apprentice is the only boy who is a member of the society.

54. *The Chairman.*] We have been told in regard to other benefit societies, all of the same character as this, that the great benefit is that they took in women and children, but yours does not: what is the cause?—It would be an inducement for the apprentices to stay off because they get more sick-pay than wages. Our lowest scale is 3d. per week and 12s. 6d. benefit.

55. Who is the manager of the company?—Mr. George Fenwick.

56. At the meetings of the society, does he attend?—Very rarely. He used to when he was president of the society. He attends now if a wish is so expressed. I do not think he has been there at the last two general meetings.

57. Will you let me understand the full value of this amendment made at the meeting on the 4th February: formerly it was compulsory for every one to join whether they were members of friendly societies or not?—Yes.

58. The effect of this rule was that members of friendly societies need not join?—That is so; and I would like to point out that since that was carried none have dropped out who were members of other societies.

59. *Mr. Fisher.*] I think you said membership was a condition of employment?—No; not if they are members of other societies.

60. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Suppose a man who was not exempted under this rule refused to join the society, would he be discharged?—I have no power to say what the effect would be; we would simply report it.

61. *The Chairman.*] What would happen supposing a man got heavily in arrears?—I really cannot say. We would get it in some way or another. We would report it to the manager, and leave it to him.

62. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Has any case of the kind ever arisen, and a man been discharged for this?—No. Since the society has been formed we have paid £1,300 away in sick benefit.

63. *The Chairman.*] Can you give us any idea how the fund has stood from year to year: has there been any year when the sick benefit has cost more than the subscriptions?—No; we have always been able to pay our way, so far as I remember. I have not heard any one say that the society has been in arrears, and that a levy has had to be made.

64. What benefit do you consider there is in belonging to a registered friendly society above that of a private benefit society?—Nothing, so far as I can see, but that you get doctor and medicine for your wife and family.

65. You think that alone is enough to make you keep to a friendly society?—I think so. We recognise the benefits of an industrial society as being equal to the benefits of the *Otago Daily Times* society, and any man belonging to that society is exempt from ours.

66. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Have you thought of the desirability or otherwise of giving your society legal status?—I see no benefit in it unless registered under the Unclassified Societies Act.

67. If there were a special Act dealing with these outside societies, do you not think it would be well to have them recognised at law?—I think there would be no harm in dealing with the societies under a Bill like the Unclassified Societies Act, where you have full control over your officers and members. I believe that would be a very good thing.

68. *Mr. Fisher.*] Suppose a man of irreproachable character chose to say, for reasons of his own, "I do not care to join this society," what would happen to him?—Mr. Fenwick would be able to answer that better than I could. We would ask him to join, and if he refused we would report him to the manager. We do not know what steps would be taken. One of the reasons for the constitution of this society was the fact that previous to its inception it was a very common thing for subscription-lists to go round, and in the case of a subscription-list coming round it was not a matter of 6d. or 1s., but a matter of 10s.; whereas in this way you provide for a needy man, and if you fall ill yourself you provide for yourself.

69. *The Chairman.*] In case of sickness or accident, has the firm had to give subscriptions?—I have known the firm to pay wages as well as the sick benefit of the society. I received wages myself for a fortnight. I do not say the company make a practice of it.

70. *Mr. Fisher.*] If I choose not to join your society I am reported to the manager?—Yes. Subsequently, the witness reappeared, and said,—I wish to say, in reference to the amount on deposit, that we wished the company to take another £25, and they would not take it.

71. *The Chairman.*] How do you mean?—In addition to our £100 we have about £40 odd floating, and we wished to invest it instead, and we wished to put it with the company, for the same reason that we invested the other £50, but the company thought they had enough of the society's money, and they refused to take it.

JOSEPH ABERNETHY was examined on oath.

73. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—I am a compositor, in the *Otago Daily Times* office.

74. How long have you been in the service?—Since a boy—about seventeen years.