

95. *Hon. Major Steward.*] The society, I see, was established in September, 1879, and this particular copy of rules was published in 1891: can you tell me whether the rules printed in 1891 are the same as the rules that were in existence for the period between 1879 and 1891, or whether they differed?—Not on essential points. So far as my memory serves me, they are the same.

96. Then, I should regard this rule we have just been referring to in connection with the accumulated funds never being permitted to go beyond £100 as an essential rule: would you not also so regard it?—Yes.

97. I want to know, therefore, whether that rule was in force prior to 1891: do you know that?—I have an impression that it was not, but that at a general meeting preceding the formation of the present rules the question of surrender value was brought up for discussion, and, trusting to my memory, I believe that rule was the outcome.

98. When did the strike take place?—It must have been about 1887 or 1886.

99. Then, as you think this Rule 34, which limits the amount of the funds to £100, was passed at or about the time these rules were published, it follows, does it not, that it was not in operation at the time of the strike?—So far as my memory serves me, it was not.

100. Therefore, it might have been the position that the accumulated funds were much larger at the time of the strike?—That is so.

101. *The Chairman.*] I see Rule 22 deals with defaulting officers and their expulsion from the society. I presume that does not mean that an officer will escape criminal prosecution and just be expelled from the society?—So far as we understand, we would have no legal claim upon a man. We are safeguarded by the fact that the sum in the hands of an officer is very small, and not sufficient to give any man a reason for risking his position of permanent employment.

102. *Mr. Fisher.*] When I was a compositor we did our work and got our money and pleased ourselves. Do you feel that, by the existence of these rules and regulations, there is a grip on the men by the company?—No; I feel there is no grip.

GEORGE FENWICK was examined on oath.

103. *The Chairman.*] What is your profession?—I am a journalist on the *Otago Daily Times*.

104. How long have you been in that service?—I have been with the present company since it started in 1878.

105. *Mr. Fisher.*] What is your exact official position?—I am managing director, and also editor.

106. *The Chairman.*] You remember the formation of the benefit society?—Yes.

107. We have been told in evidence that this was a movement made spontaneously by the men themselves: is that so?—It was in a measure spontaneous. I immediately associated myself with the movement, but its origin was purely from the men. I immediately joined with them because I saw the great benefits to be derived from the institution of such a society.

108. You joined with the men to facilitate and help?—Quite so.

109. You are certain the company partook of no particular direct or indirect pecuniary benefit by this?—Not the slightest.

110. Since the formation of the society, have you heard any complaints from the men about the compulsory membership?—Yes; there have been complaints on the part of a very limited number.

111. What form did the complaints take?—Well, one man in particular objected on principle to being coerced into joining the society. Perhaps I should explain that at the origin of the society it was a purely voluntary one. It remained so for, I should think, three years, or something like that, and did not work quite satisfactorily. There were some men in the office who, owing to the society being purely voluntary, would not join; and it was the case in our office, as with other employers, that the very men most benefited by it were the most difficult to induce to become members. The society was not satisfactory to a large number of other members, and a general meeting was held, and it was then decided that membership should be made compulsory. I may say the company took no part in directing that decision. It was entirely from the men themselves.

112. As a member of the society, will you tell us what was meant by "compulsory": did it mean that if a man did not choose to pay his contribution he would be sent away by the firm?—That was the wish of the men, decidedly.

113. Was there any case of such a thing happening?—None during the whole time. The position the company took up was this: While wishing to aid the society in every way they could, they would not go the length of dismissing a man because of his refusal to join.

114. A former witness stated that he could not give us any opinion as to what would happen to a man who got into arrears, or refused to pay?—The present position is simply this: that it has been made compulsory on every person in the company's employment by the society itself, and with the consent of the company, unless members of some other friendly society of standing.

115. Supposing a man who is not a member of a friendly society refused?—I have been asked on one or two occasions, in the cases of men who were not members of another society, and who would not join the benefit society, to deduct from their wages their weekly subscription, but that the company has declined to do. There has never been a case in which any extreme steps have been taken. I have pointed out on more than one occasion to men who wished to be relieved from joining that this society was really in their own interest, and have urged them in as nice a way as I could not to put obstructions in the way of the society.

116. Supposing anything happened, and this society had to be dissolved, is there any possible obstacle in your mind to the distribution of the money amongst the men?—None whatever. The rules provide that if any alteration or addition to the rules is considered desirable a meeting of members shall be called, and they have power to deal with any alteration.

117. Was that rule in force at the time of a certain strike that took place?—It was; so far as I know, that rule has been in existence since the formation of the society.