

146. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Suppose the society were to report to you, as manager, that one of their fellow-employés was not a member of a friendly society, nor of this benefit society, and declined to join the society, and they wanted to compel him to do so, would you assist their view in any way by discharging that man?—No; we have been very careful in matters of that kind. We have never been put in that position yet. I know my board would not do so. We have never interfered with matters of that kind.

147. Then, you look upon the thing as a purely voluntary matter on the part of the men?—Quite so.

148. Except that you look upon it as a benefit to them?—Oh, yes.

149. *The Chairman.*] Perhaps it has been very beneficial to the company, inasmuch as subscription-lists do not go round now?—We have never been asked for subscriptions; but, in the event of a man being hurt in the mine, I always visit the person, and we give him a cheque for £5 or £10, independent of the money they receive from the funds of the society. We have given as much as £25—never more, and never under £5. I think the society is more for cases of ordinary sickness.

150. *Hon. Major Steward.*] In cases of ordinary sickness, you know these men are getting the ordinary allowance: do you take that into consideration, and give them nothing yourselves?—If a man is laid up with ordinary sickness we do not visit him with a view to helping him, but if the mine-manager knows that his circumstances are such as require help he mentions it; but I have seldom visited any one under such circumstances.

151. Do you know the amount of subscription in this society?—I think it is 9d. per week.

152. For all adults?—Yes.

153. Are there any younger members?—Oh, yes; there are a lot of young lads, and they pay half.

154. Do you know what is the amount of the benefit they receive when on the sick fund?—I think it is £1 a week for adults, and half that for young members.

155. And limited to a certain time?—We have a man in the hospital at the present time whom we have been helping for two years.

156. That would come from the benevolent fund; the society would hardly pay full sick-allowance all that time, but they pay half?—Yes; it was a very bad case.

157. Do they pay funeral-allowances as well as sick-pay?—Yes.

158. And provide doctor and medicine?—No; that is another arrangement. There is a doctor to whom the men subscribe in addition.

159. *The Chairman.*] You think one good point about this society is that it includes young people who could not possibly join a friendly society?—Quite so; that is a special feature in this society.

160. *Hon. Major Steward.*] How many employés have you?—I think, 180 just now.

161. And how many of these do the pay-sheets show are not members of the benefit society?—I do not think there are ten or a dozen.

162. Therefore the society really represents the whole of the employés, less a very small percentage?—I think you may safely say so, so far as my memory goes.

CHRISTCHURCH.

TUESDAY, 8TH JUNE, 1897.

WILLIAM ROWE was examined on oath.

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your business?—I am a clicker in the “Zealandia” Boot-factory.

2. How long have you been in that employment?—Somewhere about twelve or fourteen years.

3. There is a benefit society connected with the firm?—Yes.

4. Can you tell us how long ago it started?—I cannot tell you the exact year, but it was about eight years ago.

5. You remember its formation?—I do; I was a member at the time.

6. Can you tell us with what object the society was started?—In the first place, there were a great number of our men who did not belong to any friendly society whatever, and as soon as sickness overtook any of them, and they were laid up for any length of time—six weeks or more—it was a frequent thing to have subscription-lists going round the factory. They became so numerous that at last we got sick and tired of them, and we decided amongst ourselves to form a private society, with the object of doing away with subscription-lists altogether. That was really the cause of the formation of the benefit society.

7. Have you a copy of the rules with you?—Yes [Exhibit 25].

8. Do you consider this society compulsory in any way?—Certainly not.

9. Is any preference offered by the firm to people who join the society?—None whatever.

10. Does the firm contribute any subsidy towards the society?—It has done so; for a number of years they were in the habit of giving us £5 at the end of every year. But that was not used for sick-pay. The firm built up the funeral fund, or the greater part of it, by these annual contributions. We have contributed somewhere about £8 at one time and £5 at another time.

11. Have you had any claims on the funeral funds?—Yes.

12. £8 or £5 would not go very far with funerals?—At present the value of the fund is £52. I think there have been four claims on the funeral fund since it was organized.

13. Is there any inducement held out to other members?—No; they are never asked to join. If a person wishes to become a member of the society he makes application to the secretary of his