

218. Supposing, then, that legislation could be devised that would allow your society to be put in a proper legal position in regard to these funds, and so on, do you not think that would be a great advantage?—I quite agree with it.

219. Excepting that, can you see any way in which the society could be benefited?—It would depend upon its own individual results, and what we could do to keep up the management.

220. But you cannot suggest anything further?—Nothing that I can see, but that we might help ourselves. The society is working itself in an entirely successful way. I may say there has been no coercion. I have been a member now, I suppose, for eighteen or nineteen years. I may say that there has never been the slightest coercion in regard to anybody who would not join the society. Only once did our worthy chief, who is now dead, address them by letter, saying he wished every worker would take the advantages that would be gained by working together, because it was only by working together that we could make the thing work. There was no coercion at all. I myself, as a member of a friendly society, thought at first, "Well, is this right or is it wrong?" and I watched for years, and I ask the same question now. I say there is nothing derogatory or harmful to a friendly society through membership of that simple little benefit society.

221. On the other hand, as a Forester, you must know that a working-man cannot pay into too many societies?—I quite recognise that; and I have recognised all my life that if you go into too many things you come down.

222. *Hon. Major Steward.*] The men are at liberty to join as they please?—As they please. It has not done any harm to friendly societies, because I have asked members according to their age if they like benefit societies. I always say it is the very best thing they can do.

223. *The Chairman.*] It does not prevent a man from joining the Foresters?—I am quite of that opinion.

224. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Have any men who were formerly Oddfellows or Foresters left those societies in order to join yours?—To my knowledge, never.

225. Some of the men pay subscriptions to both?—Yes.

FREDERICK CHARLES EAST was examined on oath.

226. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—I am a lithographer in the *Lyttelton Times* office.

227. Are you an officer of the benefit society?—No.

228. You are a member?—Yes.

229. Are you a member of any other friendly society?—No.

230. How long have you been a member of this society?—Since the commencement.

231. This society was formed amongst the men?—Yes.

232. At the desire of the men themselves?—Well, yes.

233. It was not instigated in any manner by the firm?—The Hon. Mr. Reeves, I think it was, wished that there should be such a society, and he gave a donation.

234. Did the firm in any way take an active interest in the management, or leave it entirely to the workers?—Left it entirely to the employés—to the representatives from the respective departments.

235. You saw no direct interest to the firm in establishing this?—None whatever.

236. You have seen none since?—None at all.

237. Have you heard any case of a member of a friendly society leaving his friendly society, such as the Oddfellows or Druids, because he had joined this benefit society?—No, not to my knowledge.

238. *Hon. Major Steward.*] I suppose you have seen the working of the society, and you know it has been a benefit to a good many employés at different times?—Yes.

239. And, also, I see there is a very considerable accumulated fund from which the men get benefit by way of loans?—That is correct.

240. I suppose this has been a useful thing to a number of employés at different times?—Yes.

241. As a matter of fact, all these loans have been repaid so far?—So far as my knowledge goes. There has been no loss.

242. You have heard no objection from any employés as to the constitution of the society or the working of the rules?—None whatever.

243. Even if there were, they have it in their own power to alter the rules if they think fit?—Quite so.

244. I believe, also, that members can join quite irrespective of age or their physical condition?—Yes; every one in the employ can join.

245. From that point of view this society offers opportunities to a certain number of employés that they could not get elsewhere?—Yes.

246. Supposing that, as an outcome of this inquiry into these societies, a measure is proposed to Parliament under which societies such as the *Lyttelton Times* society could be registered with their present rules and constitution, do you or do you not think it would be an advantage?—Well, I think it would.

JAMES CLUNIE WILKIN was examined on oath.

247. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am manager of the *Lyttelton Times* Company.

248. Have you any official position in regard to the benefit society?—I am a trustee and patron of the society.

249. Do you remember the formation of this society?—Yes.

250. Was it formed at the instigation of the firm, or was it entirely a movement amongst the men?—It was entirely a movement amongst the men. It was first organized by a man named Hebden, who conceived the idea that it would be a good thing to have a benefit society in connection with the office. He was encouraged, and started the society. The firm helped it in its infancy by subscribing—I am speaking from memory—£100.