

26. *Mr. Fisher.*] The view Major Steward wishes to put to you is that if there is legislation it would be almost impossible to exempt some societies and include others?—I do not see any objection to being brought under it.

27. It could not possibly do you any harm?—No.

JOHN SINCLAIR was examined on oath.

28. *The Chairman.*] What is your business?—I am a brass-turner in the Government railway workshops.

29. Are you an official of the society?—I am treasurer.

30. Have you seen anything in the work of the society that would make you think it is of benefit to the men generally?—Yes; I find it a wonderful benefit to the men as it exists.

31. Is there any grumbling amongst them about it?—No; nothing as regards the benefits or conditions under which they work.

32. You have had experience of it for some years?—About fifteen or sixteen years.

33. *Mr. Fisher.*] You heard what Mr. Handisides said as to how the society went into decay during the time of the Commissionership of Mr. Conyers, in consequence of the compulsory condition in regard to joining the society: do you concur with that or not?—I do concur; decidedly.

34. *Hon. Major Steward.*] The compulsory clause providing for compulsion as from the employer's side evidently has a disastrous effect on the society. I want to ask a question as to whether, if provision were made for the employés themselves by majority to make it compulsory, you would think that an advantage or otherwise?—Well, I think, as far as we as a body are concerned, I am decidedly of opinion that we should be allowed to act on similar lines to what we are doing—that is, without any force being brought to bear on men not inclined to join the society.

35. You do not think power should be given to yourselves to enforce such compulsion?—No, I do not think so. Some of the men are attached perhaps to other societies, and working-men cannot afford to go into two or three societies. I rather think it would grate upon the men to be compelled to join.

36. *Mr. Fisher.*] You feel convinced in your own mind that they would object to compulsion in any form whatever?—I am not prepared to say that: I only give you what I think would be the most reasonable aspect of the case. I do not know the mind of the men as a body, but, looking at the success which has attended the working of the society so far as membership is concerned, I do not think it would be advisable to make it compulsory.

37. Do you think they would object to compulsion in any form whatever?—I cannot say.

WILLIAM GIMMELL was examined on oath.

38. *The Chairman.*] What is your business?—I am a cooper in Ward and Co.'s brewery.

39. Have you been long in that service?—Close upon five years.

40. There is a benefit society connected with the brewery?—Yes.

41. Are you an official of that society?—No; I am a member.

42. Do you bring any copy of the rules with you?—There are really no rules; it is a small affair. There are no printed rules.

43. Are there any written rules posted up anywhere in the building?—I do not think so.

44. Can you give us a general idea as to the way the society is worked?—Yes. We pay 6d. per week into the club, as we call it, and in case of sickness or accidents to a member he receives £1 per week for six weeks. After that it is left with the committee, who are the remaining members of the club, as to the amount he will receive. At the end of the year the funds, if any, are divided amongst the members of the club.

45. Have you a secretary or treasurer?—No.

46. Who collects the money?—The clerk in the office deducts 1s. fortnightly from our wages; of course, no compulsion is used.

47. How many persons are in the employ of the firm?—About twenty-two.

48. Are all members of the society?—No.

49. Can you give us any idea how many are members of the society?—I cannot tell the exact number; I believe, fourteen or fifteen out of the twenty.

50. How is the society financially? Have your contributions been able to meet your sick-expenditure?—Yes, ever since I have been there. The funds are divided every Christmas, and my experience has been that I have always taken from 3s. to 8s. a year more than I have paid in.

51. Does the firm subsidise?—Yes; they give four guineas per annum.

52. *Mr. Fisher.*] There has not been much sickness in the brewery?—There has not been in my time.

53. Brewing is not an unhealthy occupation?—I should not think so.

54. *The Chairman.*] Is there any other benefit besides sick payment?—No.

55. Suppose a man left the brewery after having paid in so much during the year, would he get a share of that money if he had not been sick?—That would entirely rest with the men.

56. Is there any question as to a quorum of this committee?—All the men are the committee.

57. Do any of your men, or most of them, belong to any other friendly society?—Several do; I do not.

58. Do the firm take any interest in the active management, or leave it entirely to the men?—Entirely to the men.

59. The firm has no advantage to gain by it?—None.

60. *Mr. Fisher.*] Do you ever hold any meetings?—No, not in my time.

61. Is there any stated time for holding meetings?—No.