

JOHN GEORGE THOMAS WOOD was recalled.

296. *The Chairman.*] Mr. Dempsie, the previous witness, has said that at the ballot taken by the men the proposal to register the association was rejected?—Well, sir, the minute-book will prove that there were sixty-one, as far as I can remember, in favour of it, and fifty-nine against it. It was a close majority, but the majority was in favour of registration.

297. Can you let us have the minute-book?—I cannot, because I am not secretary at present.

298. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Was it a ballot?—No; a show of hands. Dempsie was chairman at the time, and I was secretary. You must distinguish between the working chairman and the chairman *ex officio*, the latter being also chairman of the Canterbury Stevedoring Association. Dempsie, who was chairman of the men's side of the association, was present at this meeting. It was a morning meeting, held in the shelter-shed, and the position I was placed in was this: I told the meeting what had transpired the night previous at the joint committee meeting in Christchurch, and that the employers' section were adverse to registration, and would not listen to anything about registration at all.

299. This meeting was subsequent to the committee meeting in Christchurch?—It was held the next morning. After I had explained the attitude of the employers' section towards registration the men took a show of hands. I pointed out to the men that I did not want to put them in a hole, but that if they wanted the society registered I would register it. I also told them I wanted a substantial majority, but when the show of hands was taken I only had a bare majority.

300. You affirm you had a majority?—Yes.

301. You say the minutes will prove this?—Yes.

302. In your own handwriting?—Yes.

On the following day the Secretary, at the request of the Commission, inspected the minute-book above referred to, and found the following entry in regard to the meeting held to discuss the question of the registration of the association: "Special meeting of the Lyttelton Lumpers' and Wharf-labourers' Association, held in shelter-shed, on Monday, 22nd April, 1895, 121 members being present. After the attitude of the general committee *re* registration under Conciliation and Arbitration Act was explained to the meeting it was resolved, That a ballot be taken on this question of registration. Carried. Resolved, That a three-fourths majority of the members present shall proceed with the registration; and, after the ballot being taken, the chairman declared the figures to be 58 for and 63 against. It was decided to allow the matter to drop for the present.—Confirmed, JOHN DEMPSIE, Chairman."

At the same time the Secretary to the Commission was handed the following letter from Mr. J. G. T. Wood: "12th June, 1897.—Mr. Tregear, Chairman, Private Benefit Societies Commission.—SIR,—Kindly allow me to correct an error in my evidence. I gave the figures *re* the ballot as to registration as 61 for and 59 against. The figures should be 58 for and 63 against. I was speaking from memory at the time, and trust you will allow this alteration in my evidence.—J. G. T. WOOD, Lyttelton."

Subsequently, at Wellington, the Chairman of the Commission made a statement in regard to this incident.

FRIDAY, 11TH JUNE, 1897.

HARRY PACKWOOD was examined on oath.

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—I am a mill-hand at the Kaiapoi Woollen Mills.
2. Have you been long in that service?—About fourteen years.
3. There is a benefit society connected with the mill?—Yes.
4. Are you an official of the society?—Secretary.
5. Have you brought a copy of the rules?—Yes [Exhibit 39].
6. How long has this society been in existence?—It was started in 1882.
7. Have you got any balance-sheet?—Yes, last year's [Exhibit 40].
8. How many employés are there in the factory?—Three hundred.
9. How many are members of this society?—Two hundred and thirty-five.
10. Are any of those who are not members of your society members of any friendly society?—Of course, I cannot say.
11. Is it a voluntary society?—Entirely so.
12. Does the management of the factory take any part in the management of the society?—No.
13. The members can elect any officers they please?—Yes.
14. Does the company give any sort of aid or subsidy?—No; but Mr. Isaac Wilson, when chairman, presented the sick fund with shares to the value of £300 in the company, and, of course, a good deal of our funds come from them.
15. Your receipts meet your expenditure with a surplus of about £90?—Yes.
16. Have you any idea why those working in the factory and not members of the society do not join?—I cannot give any reason at all, because it is to their benefit to belong to it. At the end of every year we pay them back a dividend, and they have had 10s. back of the 13s. paid in.
17. You think it is just a want of foresight?—Yes; because a man in this benefit society and in a friendly society practically gets his money back.
18. Perhaps it is the young and thoughtless who do not join?—No; it seems to be a number of grown-up girls—single women. Of course, there are many children under sixteen who do not belong to it.
19. *Mr. Fisher.*] You have been fourteen years in the mill?—Yes.
20. Have there been any accidents in that time?—Very few.
21. Any of a serious nature?—Only a painter, who fell from the roof.