

21. How are the amounts collected from the members?—It is deducted from their wages every month.

22. The amount is stopped from the men's wages?—Yes.

23. *Hon. Major Steward.*] You told me that membership was voluntary?—Yes.

24. Then, the amount is only deducted from those who join the society?—Yes.

25. *The Chairman.*] Has the company interfered in any way in the control of the funds by appointing certain officers on committee?—Not so far as I know.

26. What is your opinion as to the benefit of this society?—I think it is a very good one. If you look at the statement of accounts so far as our branch is concerned, I do not see how any other opinion could be given.

27. What is the proportion of the men on the works belonging to the society?—Nearly all belong to it; I do not think more than half a dozen do not belong to it.

28. *Mr. Fisher.*] You say the society is a voluntary society?—Yes.

29. Will you listen to this statement—it does not matter by whom: “that there is a private benefit society established with these sugar-works. It is compulsory for all employés to join this society after they have been in the employ of the company for two years. Though the company deny that they use any compulsion, still the compulsion is used, as in my own case I was informed when I declined to join that they intended to shorten hands soon, and the preference would be given to retain those who belonged to the society. So I had to join or lose my position, though I pointed out that I belonged to the Oddfellows and Foresters. I was told to give those societies up.” I ask you to say whether this statement, according to your belief, is true or not true?—I think he is alluding to the other society; I do not think it is alluding to this society at all.

30. That is called the private benefit society?—I think it is alluding to the provident fund. In my opinion, his statement is not correct; no compulsion whatever is used.

31. *The Chairman.*] Not as to the other fund?—Not as to the other.

32. *Mr. Fisher.*] Is this statement true or untrue: “That there was a petition and letters got up in opposition to the Private Benefit Societies Bill introduced to Parliament”; and, again, “This was the feeling of the employés at the works, but still they were compelled to sign letters and petitions against the Bill at present before your honourable House, and I amongst the rest”: is that statement true or untrue?—I can hardly understand it. There was a petition got up, and then the company asked the men to sign another petition saying that they wished the society to be continued, and that it was of great benefit to them. They were asked to sign this, and all did except one or two.

33. Well, listen to this again: “I signed a telegram to the Premier congratulating him on the success of the Bill. For this the manager called me up and informed me that I was dismissed, and that I would have to go at the end of the week. Later on he called me up and said that I could wait till the end of the month, as he did not wish the public to say that I was dismissed for sending the telegram to the Premier. Later on he again called me up and said, ‘After what you have done in regard to the Bill, it will be impossible for you to stay on here any longer.’” Is that statement true or untrue?—I cannot say whether that was true or untrue.

34. *The Chairman.*] Practically, in regard to this society, you have heard little grumbling on the part of the men?—I have heard none whatever.

35. If legislation were introduced which would allow this society to be registered pretty nearly as it stands, would you see any objection to it being registered?—Certainly not, but the company have an objection, I believe. They say they would have no further control over the affair.

36. Would you explain what control they wish over the affair?—What they have at present under the rules.

37. I asked you the question if the rules could be registered nearly as they now stand?—There would be no objection whatever, I should think.

38. Do you know if many of the members of the benefit society are also members of the provident society?—I think so; a good many of them.

39. Have you heard anything said amongst the men that by having to contribute to this benefit society and also to the provident fund they have had to drop their subscriptions to other friendly societies as they could not contribute to so many?—I think I have heard one or two complaining like that.

40. But it is not within your knowledge that friendly societies have been hurt by this?—No.

41. *Hon. Major Steward.*] And, in point of fact, the benefits accruing from this society are quite as large as the benefits from friendly societies?—I understand they are more, according to the rate of contribution.

42. *The Chairman.*] The subsidy of the company enabling the lower rate of contribution?—Yes.

43. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Then, all these benefits mentioned can be obtained by the payment of 1s. per week?—Yes; but we only contribute under Scale A—that is, 6d.—and the company pay 3d. of it. The men only pay 3d. per week.

44. *The Chairman.*] Are the men perfectly satisfied with the amount of control they have locally?—Yes; they have full control.

45. But the head-quarters are in Sydney?—Yes. The only thing is the manager of the company is treasurer, and the committee of management are the workmen, and the officers are workmen.

46. *Mr. Fisher.*] What is the amount of your reserve fund?—The report and statement of accounts will show that.

47. Cannot you tell us what is the amount of the accumulated funds belonging to your branch?—Yes; it is all in money lodged with the company according to the rules, and the company pay 6 per cent. per annum on it.