

48. Is it still your opinion that the employés have full power of control over their own affairs and the funds of the society, despite these conditions here that the company shall have the right to nominate a person to act as secretary and treasurer in Sydney, and that at each branch the company's local representative shall be elected as district treasurer?—I think so.

49. *Hon. Major Steward.*] The treasurer is only one of the governing committee?—Yes.

50. There are five altogether?—There are six besides him, counting the secretary.

51. Is your balance increasing or keeping stationary?—Last year it increased by £25.

52. Is that the usual state of things? Are the contributions much in excess generally?—No, they fluctuate.

53. Have you always had funds enough to meet demands?—So far.

54. *Mr. Fisher.*] Do I understand that in accordance with the provisions in the agreement you are nominated to the position of secretary by the company?—No; that agreement refers to the head office in Sydney. I am only secretary of the branch.

55. Are you elected by the men?—Yes; I am elected first of all as a member of committee, and the committee elect me as secretary.

56. *The Chairman.*] Can you make any suggestions to us by which the constitution of the society could be bettered in any way?—I cannot.

57. It seems to work perfectly to you?—I think so.

58. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Persons only become members on their own application?—Yes.

59. And their application is subject to the approval of the committee?—Yes; they could be refused.

60. *Mr. Fisher.*] Did you say the accumulated funds are banked at the bank in the names of six other persons additional to the trustees?—No; the funds are all with the company.

61. Is there any rule relating to the withdrawal of the funds if the men so desired?—If any member is discharged, and he has not been on the sick-pay, he gets paid back his contributions in full.

62. I will put the question in a plainer form: Suppose the whole of the men belonging to the Chelsea branch of this private benefit society wished to withdraw from the possession of the trustees the whole of their money, could they do so on a vote of their own?—No, not by the rules.

63. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Is there any power of winding up the society?—Not that I am aware of.

64. *Mr. Fisher.*] Then, the Colonial Sugar Company are masters of the fund belonging to the men?—Certainly, to that extent of the rules; but they are protected by the rules and by the agreement with the committee.

65. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Every member of the society, as I understand, can voluntarily retire?—They can leave.

66. If they do leave they are entitled to a refund of so much?—To a refund of half the contribution if they have not been in receipt of sick-pay.

67. So that if the men were all to agree to withdraw from the society they would all of them be entitled to draw it?—No; I was wrong. I should have said if they resign the company's service.

68. But if they elect to remain in the company's service they cannot withdraw from the fund?—No; there is no provision under the rules.

69. *Mr. Fisher.*] In the event of a man leaving the employ for any reason of his own, would he be entitled to withdraw anything from the accumulated funds of the society?—One-half of what had been contributed, provided he had not been in receipt of sick-pay.

70. Suppose a man leaves the service at the end of four years and a half he forfeits all he has paid in?—Yes; I forgot to mention that. He must be five years in the service before he can draw anything; but if he is discharged before five years he gets all he has paid in.

71. But if a man voluntarily leaves the service of the company after four years and nine months of service he leaves behind all he has paid in?—That is correct.

DAVID ELSTON was examined on oath.

72. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—I am clerk in the office at the works of the Colonial Sugar-refining Company.

73. How long have you been in that service?—About ten years.

74. Then, you remember the employés' benefit society being formed?—Yes.

75. Can you tell us the reason why it was formed?—Well, I really cannot.

76. Can you tell us whether it originated amongst the men or with the employers?—We had a benefit society there before this one was formed.

77. One nearly on the same lines?—Well, it was not subsidised by the company.

78. The contribution then was higher?—Yes, it was just double—it was 6d. per week instead of 3d.

79. When the company offered to subsidise the new company it was entirely, in your opinion, from a desire to help the men?—Most certainly.

80. There was no other motive at all?—None that we could see.

81. Seeing that it was being established from a kindly motive on the part of the company, you voluntarily gave up the other society and joined this?—Yes.

82. Since the society has been at work, have you heard any grumbling on the part of the men in regard to it?—No, I do not think I have.

83. They join quite freely?—Yes.

84. And generally you have heard it is considered a benefit by the men?—Yes.

85. How long hours do they work at the refinery?—Forty-eight hours and fifty-eight hours a week—ten hours a day; but on Saturday as a rule they work eight hours.