

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 think it is untrue, so far as I know.

127. Very well, give me your opinion as to the truth or otherwise of this: "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'?"—Well, I really cannot say; as far as I know, it is untrue. Of course, I cannot say what passed between the manager and a workman.

128. *The Chairman.*] Did you sign a petition to Parliament against the Private Benefit Societies Bill?—Yes.

129. Were you asked to do so?—No.

130. *Mr. Fisher.*] I will just take your opinion as to this statement: "Letters and petitions against the Bill were drawn up by the employers and brought to us to sign, and when there was any demur as to signing we were taken in one at a time to the manager's office, handed a pen, and told to sign. In my case I told the manager that it was against my convictions and will that I was signing, but he said I must sign, and I signed the first lot of papers, but I refused to sign the last lot." Is that true or untrue?—As far as I know, it is untrue.

131. How are the accumulated funds of the society invested?—With the company.

132. Who are the trustees who have the control of this fund?—The names of the trustees are in the rules, but I do not remember them.

133. Is it your opinion that in the event of any difficult or crucial question arising, and the employés by resolution demanded possession of their funds from the trustees, they could regain possession of their funds?—They could not unless they left the service.

134. Suppose the members of this society as a body met and passed a resolution declaring that the funds shall be handed over by the trustees to them, would the trustees hand them over?—I cannot say.

135. You spoke, then, of a member of the society leaving the company's employ: does he draw what he has paid in, supposing he has not been on the sick and benefit fund?—Yes.

136. What does he draw?—The full amount of his contribution.

137. Is your statement not opposed to Rule 30, which says, "Any member not coming within the provisions of Rule 32 who is discharged from the company's employment and is not in receipt of relief shall thereupon cease to have any interest in the society, and shall be repaid one-half the amount credited to him under Scale A, provided that he has received no sick-pay from the society during his time of membership; but there shall be no refund to any member who has been in receipt of sick-pay, or who has voluntarily resigned from the service of the Colonial Sugar-refining Company (Limited) before the completion of five years continuous membership, or who may elect to discontinue his subscription to the society." You see, they must be five years in the service before they are entitled to draw any of what they have paid in. Suppose a man has been in the company's service not for five years, but for four years and nine months, how much does he take out?—He would get nothing; but if he has been in the employ five years he will get all his contribution. That works in this way: These contributions are supposed to be 2s. per month, but the company pays half that amount.

138. *Hon. Major Steward.*] I cannot see that, for the reason that there is a new rule which says, "Under an agreement made between the committee of management of the employés' benefit society and the Colonial Sugar-refining Company (Limited) the latter undertake to pay on behalf of members in their service one-half of the subscriptions levied under Scale A, thus reducing the members' payments under that scale to 3d. per week, which sum insures sick-pay, funeral allowance, and hospital subsidy in accordance with the rules." Surely it is only half of that 3d. they can withdraw?—I know it from experience, of course, because we referred that question to Sydney. Some of the men read it one way and some another. We got a reply back that it was to be half of the contribution, which was supposed to be 6d. per week. Therefore the amount to be refunded is 3d. per week, which is what the men pay in.

139. You were asked about the trustees; according to Rule 3, is there not a body of trustees altogether independent of the committee of management?—Yes, in Sydney.

140. That body really has control of the whole of the funds, both your branches and all others?—Yes.

141. Four of the trustees are elected by the members?—Yes.

142. And the other two are *ex officio*?—Yes.

143. *Mr. Fisher.*] Do you see any objection to these rules being registered in New Zealand as well as in New South Wales?—Well, I do not see any objection; I do not know whether the company would.

144. Would you please separate your answer; I ask you whether, in your opinion, it would be advantageous or otherwise to have this society registered in New Zealand?—Well, I really do not know the rules of friendly societies. I do not know whether it would alter our rules to register the society, and whether the company would contribute as they do now.

145. If the company does not object to registration in New South Wales, why should it object to registration in New Zealand?—I cannot tell you that.