

JAMES HENRY HAVELOCK SPEEDY was examined on oath.

146. *The Chairman.*] You are in the employ of the Colonial Sugar-refining Company?—Yes.

147. What office do you hold?—I am engineer.

148. How long have you been in the service?—Seven years.

149. Did you belong to the society that was in existence before the employes' benefit society was started?—No; I have only belonged to the last society.

150. Now, the former had nearly double the contribution to what this one has. Was the reason you did not join it because you considered the contribution too heavy?—No.

151. What made you join the new one?—Well, I cannot remember now, but I think it was just that I was an employé there when the new one came along.

152. You saw that there were greater benefits to be given to the men from this society?—Yes.

153. Do you think that has been realised?—Certainly; the balance-sheets show that.

154. You think that any man with a reasonable amount of providence and thrift should belong to such a society?—I certainly think so.

155. Are you satisfied with the amount of control that the men have over the disposition of the funds they subscribe to?—Yes, I think it is quite reasonable.

156. You think that the company has only a reasonable amount of direction in regard to the subscription they themselves make?—Yes, I think that.

157. Do you remember at the time a petition being subscribed to in the works against the Private Benefit Societies Bill then before Parliament?—I remember it being signed; I saw it, and signed it. It was not presented to me to sign.

158. Did you hear at the time of any pressure being brought to bear in the works to obtain signatures?—Yes.

159. You tell us that quite seriously?—Oh, certainly.

160. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Did you ever hear of any one being compelled to join the benefit society?—No.

161. Or threatened with dismissal if he did not join?—None whatever.

162. *The Chairman.*] Or that any preference would be given to members of the benefit society without any absolute compulsion being used?—No, nothing further than trying to put before them the fact that it was for their own benefit as well as ours.

163. Who put that before them, the officers of the society or the officers of the company?—The officers of the society at the time; they just tried to enrol as many members as they could.

164. You are speaking of the time of the formation of the society?—Yes.

165. So far as you know, the origin of the society was purely amongst the men themselves; no pressure was brought by the company to make them form such a society?—It was quite so—formed amongst the employes.

166. *Mr. Fisher.*] You say that the men are quite satisfied with the amount of control they may exercise over the affairs of the society?—Well, that is hard to answer; so far as I am concerned, I am quite satisfied.

167. Then, you will not undertake to speak for the other men, or the whole of the men in the works?—No; it would be hard to say that. I have not troubled to take the votes in that direction.

168. Do you take very much interest in the views of other men in the employ in regard to the society and its affairs?—Well, I cannot say that I do. I think those who object are unreasonable; I am satisfied myself, and I cannot go any further than that.

169. *The Chairman.*] Do you belong also to the employes' provident fund?—Yes.

170. Is that also purely voluntary?—Yes, it is to all men paid by the day. It is compulsory on all salaried officers.

171. Have you heard any grumbling about having to pay to so many different funds?—I have sometimes.

172. Lately?—No, not lately.

173. *Mr. Fisher.*] Are you in charge of the engines?—I am in charge of the whole works. You understand there are other engineers employed, but they are employed by the week. But there is the chief engineer in charge, and I am that person.

174. *The Chairman.*] Are you a member of any other society?—Of the engineers' society, but I do not call that a friendly society. I do not belong to any other.

175. *Mr. Fisher.*] You are not in the habit of mixing up with the bulk of the men, so as to ascertain what their views might be in regard to this society?—No, not at present.

176. Are you one of the committee?—Yes.

177. Then, although you can give us your view in regard to the society, it is possible that the views of the men might be opposed to your view?—Yes.

178. *Hon. Major Steward.*] In the event of a new man joining the service, what happens to him? Does your secretary or any member of the committee approach him with a view to his joining the society?—Yes.

179. And represents the benefits of it?—We simply ask them once to join.

180. If they decline there is nothing further done about it?—That is so.

181. There is no such thing as reporting him to the employers, with a view to his dismissal?—No.

182. As a matter of fact, have you ever heard of the company discharging a man on the ground of not joining?—Never.

183. *The Chairman.*] You are a member also of the employes' provident fund?—Yes, on account of my office as chief engineer.