

205. You say in your petition, "I was told to give these societies up": was that by Mr. Holroyd?—Yes; he said, "Would it not be better if you gave up one of these societies?"

206. *Hon. Major Steward.*] He merely suggested it?—Yes.

207. *The Chairman.*] Did he make you understand at all that if you did not give up a society you would be a marked man?—He did not say a "marked man." He said that the men belonging to this society, when they were slackening hands, would always have the preference of the work.

208. You remember a certain period at which a petition went round against the Private Benefit Societies Bill then before the House?—Yes.

209. Were you asked to sign that petition?—Yes; I was asked to sign several.

210. Would you tell us who asked you, and in what way you were asked to sign?—They always sent one of the employes round with this petition, and that man would come to you and ask you to sign. If you did not sign it, well and good; he went round to some one else. Then it was left in the office, and perhaps, if you went into the office for anything, the clerk would say, "Are you going to put your name to it; it is awaiting signatures."

211. Well, there was no compulsion in that?—No compulsion.

212. Your petition went further than that: "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 refused to sign the last lot, and, on the contrary, I signed a telegram to the Premier congratulating him on the success of the Bill." Is that so?—On my oath that is what these men who came round with the petitions would tell us.

213. But the men who went round with the petitions were not officers of the company?—No.

214. Is it probable that they were doing this of their own motive?—No, they were sent round.

215. *Hon. Major Steward.*] How do you know?—They told us themselves.

216. That they were sent by whom?—By Mr. Miller, head manager.

217. *The Chairman.*] In the next paragraph of your petition you say, referring to the telegram to the Premier, "For this the manager called me up and informed me 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.'" Do you still say that was the case?—Part of it is correct.

218. You wish to withdraw some of it?—Yes, as to being called up by the manager and discharged.

219. What did happen?—The majority of the men, about the time of the signing of these petitions, said they would let the Bill take its course; there would not have been any petition if it had not been for the manager, because the men would not take the trouble. They said it was a pity it could not be stopped.

220. What?—The petition could not be stopped. Some of them suggested, after the Bill had passed the Lower House, that it would be a fine thing now to send a telegram congratulating Mr. Seddon on getting the Bill through the Lower House; and that if it was in the Auckland *Star* they would likely never get any more petitions up. Well, none of them cared to do it, and I said I would do it. I said I expected to get discharged, but I would risk it. I went and published it in the *Star* on Friday afternoon, and I went over on Saturday morning quite prepared to be discharged. The manager sent for me to the office, and asked me why I did it. I said I had done it at the wish of the majority of the men, and I told him I was quite prepared to be discharged, and he said the discharging of a man was neither here nor there, and that it had nothing to do with it. He wanted to know then who authorised me to do it, and I said it was the wish of the majority of the men. I asked Mr. Miller then to discharge me.

221. You asked him?—Yes; I said, "Mr. Miller, I would sooner you discharged me now when work is plentiful than let me go out later on. Very likely I will be discharged when the hands are slackened off." He said that was neither here nor there, and also, "If I discharge you now the public will take it up."

222. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Then, according to your statement, the majority of the men desired that the Bill should pass?—Yes, the great majority of them. And then I asked Mr. Miller several times, and said it would be better for me if he would discharge me. He said, "All right, Harry, I will discharge you."

223. *The Chairman.*] You say in your petition, "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.'" This is in direct contradiction to what you are saying now?—He did discharge me then. He said, "All right, Harry, I will discharge you. You can go." He came back again, and said that I had better wait until the 2nd October, when my five years in the society would be up, so that I could withdraw all my money. If you leave before the five years you only receive half the money you pay in, and if you leave after five years you get all you have paid in. Mr. Miller told me to wait until then.

224. Do not you think he was treating you with great kindness in doing that?—No; because according to the rules, if they discharge you, they have to refund all the money. If you leave yourself you only get half.

225. I will read the petition to you, and question you on each paragraph, "To the Hon. Speaker and members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled. The petition of Henry McLaughlan, of Chelsea, in the Provincial District of Auckland, in New Zealand, humbly sheweth,—(1.) That your petitioner is a workman at the Colonial Sugar-works at Chelsea, and has been working at the said works continuously for these last twelve years." Is that correct?—Yes.

226. Then, "(2.) That a difference of opinion arose between your petitioner and his employers in reference to the Bill at present before your honourable House dealing with the private benefit