

85. *The Chairman.*] I would like you to give an explanation of the statement “the power out of the company’s hands”: what power have they?—I should not have said power; it is taking their generosity away from them. They try and benefit the workmen as much as they possibly can by these funds.

86. And they would not continue their generosity if this society was registered?—They could do so, but why should the Government interfere with them?

*The Chairman:* Because yours is not the only benefit society; and others are not on such a good footing as your society.

*Witness:* Quite so; I am only speaking of my own society.

89. *The Chairman.*] Can you tell us why they should not continue such generosity when the society was registered? I cannot understand, if it is really from a motive of kindness to the men, why they should not continue that kindness, whether the society is registered or not?—I cannot answer that question.

90. *Hon. Major Steward.*] In point of fact, one branch of the society is registered in Sydney, and, if the registration of the society there is not fatal to the society’s existence, how can it be fatal in New Zealand?—I have no objection, but the company seems to have an objection.

91. *Mr. Fisher.*] Does it appear to you at all singular that the company should object to these things?—No.

92. I take it you understand their reasons for objecting?—Well, I cannot explain why the company objects to the society being registered in New Zealand.

93. What is there latent in your mind which you seem unable to express in regard to this point?—I cannot give you any grounds whatever why the company do object.

94. Suppose that Bill of 1896 diminishes the power, or assumed power, and control of the company and trustees without diminishing the power and control of the working-men, do you see any objection in that?—It means that if the Bill had passed the societies would have been smashed up.

95. Will you answer that, please, in a more direct way? Do you object to the transfer of some portion of the control and power which the company at present possesses to the men themselves?—If the Government can benefit us in any way better than the company can I will uphold it.

96. Is this company a prosperous company?—Yes.

97. Do you think the labour of the men contributes to that prosperity?—Well, as I said before, half of the provident money is lent to the company at so much per cent.

98. I do not mean that: do you think the labour of the men contributes to the prosperity of the company?—Certainly it does; it must do.

99. Then, why do you speak of the generosity of the company in giving back to the men some small portion of the prosperity which the men give to the company?—I do not think there is any other company in New Zealand that would show their generosity in such a way as this company does. I know companies in Auckland which grab every penny they can out of the workmen.

100. Are you aware that there are other firms in other parts of New Zealand which are equally as generous as the Colonial Sugar-refining Company, and they do not explain that they are displaying any generosity to their employés?—Well, I know the company pays the best wages throughout the colony.

101. Taking the nature of the work?—No; all the work is not laborious, and they pay the best of wages.

PATRICK DONOHUE was examined on oath.

102. *The Chairman.*] Are you in the service of the Colonial Sugar-refining Company?—Yes.

103. How long have you been in that service?—About eight years.

104. Are you a member of either the employés’ benefit society or the employés’ provident fund?—Yes, I am a member of both.

105. Are you a member of the local committee?—Yes, of the benefit society’s committee.

106. Were you elected by the men or nominated by the company?—Two resign at different periods and two are appointed. Of course, they have a meeting.

107. You were appointed to represent the men?—Yes, I think so.

108. Then, you would have a pretty good notion of what the men think on the subject of the benefit society. Is there any grumbling or anything of that sort against the sick and accident society?—No; I do not think so. I have never heard anything against the sick and accident society.

109. And the general opinion is that it is a benefit to the men?—Yes.

110. What do they think about the provident society?—Well, I have heard that there has been some grumbling about that, but I have never heard very much against it.

111. Did that grumbling take place when the provident fund was first started, or have you heard any grumbling about it lately?—There has been a rumour going round that some of them are dissatisfied about it.

112. Did you hear that it was because of having to pay too many contributions, or not having control of their funds?—Well, I have not been to any of the meetings where any points have been raised. Anything I have heard has only been a rumour about the place.

113. Generally when men grumble they have something to say for the reason of that grumbling; why do they grumble?—Really, I cannot say why they grumble. I cannot speak for the grumbling of other men. Of course, I belong to the fund myself, and have for five years. I can speak for myself, but I cannot come here and make opinions for a hundred men whose opinions are bound to differ.

114. What do you think of the provident fund?—I joined the provident fund over five years ago. I was not compelled to join it. The manager told me about it. Of course, I pay 1s. 3d. per week to the provident fund and the benefit society, and I think the benefits for the 1s. 3d. are as