171. Now, they had some motive: was it sheer kindness towards the men?—I do not see how it could be anything else, so far as the benefit society is concerned.

172. The provident fund is on a different basis?—In the provident fund you have no way of getting your money except by being discharged or death.

173. I want to try and get at this, because a previous witness has told us that the company would leave off the subsidy if the society were registered, and he told us it was because the company would lose its power: what power has it got?—I do not see myself; I am at liberty to leave to-morrow.

174. You would leave some of your funds?—No.

175. If you had been in the service four years and six months you would?—Certainly.

176. Do you not think that gives the company some power over the men?—I do not see that.

177. Supposing it did this out of sheer kindness of heart to help the men, can you tell us what reason they would have for withdrawing the subsidy if this society could be registered just as it stands?—I do not know what reason they would have unless it was the control of the money. One-half of the money from the provident fund is invested in the company in shares. Of course, the funds of the benefit society are entirely under the control of members, just as much as any other friendly society in the colony; but the provident fund is not.

178. *Mr. Fisher.*] Where are the accumulated funds of the private benefit society banked, and with whom?—They are banked by the trustees in Sydney.

179. Then, if that is so, why do you say the funds belonging to that society are under the control of the men?—What I mean by that is that there is a local committee elected by the members, and none but members of the society sit on the local committee.

180. Supposing a hundred workmen at Chelsea were to meet and pass a resolution demanding that the accumulated funds belonging to that society shall be distributed amongst the men, would effect be given to that resolution?—In the rules it distinctly states you must give six months' notice.

181. Suppose you gave six months' notice, would the money be distributed?—So far as I read the rules, the majority of the different local committees would have to give an opinion on that as well; you see it is a general fund.

182. Then, which do you prefer in principle, a voluntary terminable society, with a distribution of the funds at the end of twelve months, or a society such as this, which has its funds banked with the company?—Well, so far as the society goes, and so far as my principle goes, I am just as much satisfied with this society as I was with the other. I have that amount of faith in the company that I do not think they would treat me dishonestly unless I deserved it. No society in the colony can give me the same benefits as I am receiving from these two societies.

183. Then, all the men cheerfully subscribe to this benefit society?—Yes.

184. There is no objection?—They have to be three months in the employ of the company.

185. I believe deductions are made from their wages?—Yes.

186. And they consent quite cheerfully?—When this society was first formed, the secretary at that time being Mr. Hubble, each member on joining the society, after we had broken up the smaller society, was requested to sign a paper that he was agreeable to the contributions being deducted from his wages, and so far as I know each did so. I did so.

187. *Hon. Major Steward.*] The deduction is made at their request?—Yes.

188. *Mr. Fisher.*] Has there since been any complaint amongst the men in consequence of this deduction being made from their wages?—Not that I have heard.

189. *Hon. Major Steward.*] There are a few of the members who are not members?—Yes; there are a number of the employés who are not members of the benefit society. During last year I think I entered something like thirty new members.

190. *Mr. Fisher.*] I take it you have read the petition of Henry McLaughlan?—Yes.

191. What do you say generally as to the truth or otherwise of the statements in that petition?—I could bear out one statement—that is, that those hands who belonged to the fund would have preference of work in the event of a reduction in the number of hands.

192. Then he goes on to refer to pressure, coercion, dismissal, &c.: are any of these things true?—No; not to my knowledge. That petition, so far as I can see, is only the outcome of a letter sent to Mr. Pinkerton last session, which in my presence McLaughlan denied.

193. You remember the petition against the Bill?—Yes.

194. You say the men signed voluntarily and willingly?—I was home for a fortnight, and previous to my being ill the committee had been discussing the question of sending petitions to Parliament against the passing of the Bill. In April a general meeting of the employés was called to ascertain what action should be taken in the matter, and as we had sent a petition to the Hon. Mr. Swanson the year before, asking him to use his utmost endeavours to oppose the Bill passing through the Upper House, it was thought that I should write to Mr. Swanson, and ask him to do so again.

195. Did you carry round amongst the men a petition against the Bill?—Yes.

196. Did you have any difficulty in obtaining signatures?—None whatever. I merely said, "Will you sign," or "Do you wish to put your name to it," and if they asked me what it was about I read the petition to them.

197. Why was it necessary, if you experienced no difficulty in getting signatures to the petition, for Mr. Miller to take the petition into his office, and call the men in there one by one and ask them to sign it?—That was not signatures to the petition that was presented to Parliament.

198. Did anything like that take place in connection with any other matter?—Yes.

199. Why was it necessary for any signatures to be taken under that form of compulsion?—It arose through the telegram sent to the Hon. Mr. Seddon congratulating him on the Bill passing