through the House. We found by the Auckland *Star* that a telegram had been sent by one Henry McLaughlan. A couple of days afterwards I received a telegram from the Hon. Mr. Seddon, in which he told me that the Council had thrown the Bill out. This telegram was addressed to the secretary of the Colonial Sugar-refinery Company's benefit society.

200. Whether it relates to the petition you took round or whether it relates to the petition that Mr. Miller had in his office which the men were called in to sign, would these signatures have been given by the men if there had been no compulsion in the nature of being called into the manager's room and asked to sign by him?—I cannot say; I cannot give a direct answer to that, because I should not like to answer for other people. Besides, it was not a petition, it was a telegram to the Premier to repudiate the telegram sent by McLaughlan to the Premier.

201. *The Chairman.*] You did not sign that?—Yes; because I knew nothing about the telegram sent by McLaughlan.

202. *Hon. Major Steward.*] McLaughlan's telegram to Mr. Seddon was apparently on behalf of the employés of the works, who knew nothing about it, and the other telegram you refer to was to repudiate having authorised McLaughlan's telegram?—Yes.

203. *Mr. Fisher.*] Then, you cannot explain why the company wish to retain a hand in both these societies?—No, I cannot.

FREDERICK HUBBLE was examined on oath.

204. *The Chairman.*] You are in the service of the Colonial Sugar-refining Company?—Yes; I have been employed as a clerk there for the last eleven years.

205. I think the administration of the provident fund is in your hands?—I keep the books for the Chelsea branch, just an account of what the men contribute. There is only one secretary of the provident fund, and he resides in Sydney.

206. Have you a copy of the rules of the provident fund?—Yes [Exhibit 53].

207. You have nothing to do with the sick and accident society?—Nothing whatever.

208. What are your duties in connection with the provident fund?—The contributions are taken off the men's wages, and each man has a book, and I credit each man with the amount he pays.

209. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Is the deduction made with their consent?—It is made in accordance with the rules which each man has signed.

210. *The Chairman.*] After that is done, is the money then sent to Sydney to the treasurer?—The money is credited to the men in the ordinary way, and it is paid into the credit of the funds.

211. How long does it remain here in your bank account?—Of course, I do not know whether it is paid into a separate account or not; but we send particulars to Sydney every six months of the total amount credited to each man.

212. And these funds have to be invested by the trustees?—Yes.

213. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Do you remit the balance at the credit of the fund every six months?—We only account for the money received at the works. This is the annual report and balance-sheet [Exhibit 54] made up to the end of June, 1896. We shall have another soon.

214. *The Chairman.*] So all the money is invested in the company?—About half the money is invested with the company at 6 per cent. for them to do what they like with it.

215. So that really, if anything happened to the company, the whole of the men's provident fund would go?—I do not know how it is fixed at the other end. I can only state what is on the balance-sheet. I suppose we should come amongst the creditors.

216. Supposing you were going to start a society of this sort, to benefit the men, do you not think it would arise in your mind that if you invested the money which they had contributed in good security it would be safer than in a mercantile company?—I do not know; if the company be as successful in the next twenty years as they have been in the past I should say it is a very good thing.

217. There is always a risk?—But there is a risk in everything. I know persons who have invested in property, and have not realised all they put in. The company is very well managed; but, of course, you do not know what the future will be.

218. It seemed to me, in asking that question, that it would be hard upon a man, because if anything happened to the company they would not only lose their present employment but their past payments?—Of course, the company may have fixed it up in such a way that the men would not lose it. I do not think they have lent it outside the company.

219. *Mr. Fisher.*] But the future of no company can be positively assured?—Of course not.

220. As to the fund, what is invested in company shares?—£22,382.

221. Suppose this company failed, would you have any more preferential right than any other shareholder?—I am not in a position to say. I may allow you to say that.

222. When a man joins the service of the company, what is it he signs?—He signs the rules.

223. Does every man who enters the service of the company sign the rules on entering?—No; only when he joins the fund, and it is entirely optional whether he joins or not. There are eight or ten men who are eligible for this fund who are not members. It is compulsory for the salaried staff, but not for the daily workmen.

224. *Hon. Major Steward.*] Now, is it absolutely optional, or is preference given to those who do not join?—During the time I have been there the most we have ever had on the books were sixty-one, and in the employ there are about a hundred and twenty men and boys.

225. How many would be eligible if they wished to join?—There are only forty-nine on the books of the provident fund, and I should say there are about fifty-seven eligible—eight more.

226. As regards these eight, have they been long in the service or not?—They have been over two years, and one man has been there over thirteen years. Since the fund started at Chelsea thirteen have left of their own accord, and nineteen have been discharged in slack times. The total