

rate is now loose on society. The only action our Department could take was to let the police in that district know that such a person was coming into the district. That shows, to my mind, the absolute need of an extension of the power of detention.

109. *The Commissioner.*] The point is this: Has any officer of the Department the right to arrogate to himself the power to go outside the law, and your answer can only be—and you ought to be content with it—that you do it in the interests of the girls?—Yes. The Matron hoodwinked the girl, as it were, in her own interests. She was written off the books in the ordinary way, so what other motive could the Matron have had but the girl's own interest?

110. *Mr. Salter.*] But it was an illegal act on your part to keep the girl after she was twenty-one?—There is no legal direction, and we did it in the girl's own interest. I take the responsibility.

111. If that were continued, might it not open the door to abuse?—Well, I do not think so.

112. In this case there was a license made out in the name of Mr. A——?—No license was ever issued. It was made out on the agreement form.

113. There is money belonging to this girl now in the hands of the Matron?—Yes, the Matron has told me that.

114. And she has not banked it?—She cannot bank it, because the banking can only be done for inmates.

115. Is it a right thing for the Matron to hold money belonging to a girl over twenty-one, who has a right to possession of her own money?—I am not in a position to speak about that. I presume the Matron is holding it until the girl asks her for it. The girl certainly has not suffered.

116. You said just now that the Home was well provided for, and that we must consider the taxpayers' pocket. There seemed to be some reservation in that statement, and I would like to know, if you did not consider the taxpayers' pocket, would there be some other provision made for the girls?—If we did not consider the taxpayers' pocket, it might come that the girls would have Chesterfield couches to sit upon.

117. That is absurd, surely?—That is what I meant. We equip the Home according to what we consider is suitable for the inmates, and, so far as that goes, the Home is absolutely well equipped.

118. Is it not a fact that the manager of any public institution would be patted on the back for having managed the concern in an economical manner?—I have known of no case in our Department, and it is not so. Our order is to provide for the inmates properly.

119. You admit the food supplied here would be plainer than that supplied in their own homes?—Yes, but better.

120. You saw the sample of bread and dripping and bread and jam that was brought into the room?—Yes.

121. Do you not consider the girls rightly consider that as bread and scrape?—Oh, no. The jam had manifestly been put on some time, and it had soaked in a bit. That is what happened there.

122. One of the attendants said it was scantily spread?—Yes.

123. Do you agree with that?—No; not from what I have seen on the table. There is no scrimping, and no object in scrimping.

124. Do you, as representing the Department, approve of the Matron using bedroom chambers for storing the jam?—If I had noticed that in any of my inspections I think I should have said to the Matron, "Matron, I think to avoid comment I would not refill these." I do not like it, and it is not what I should do.

125. Surely on your visits of inspection you would have seen them?—I never noticed any of them. The Commissioner has seen them. They were right up on high shelves, and out of view.

126. With regard to the statements made by the girls about Miss Howden, you know the girls have a reputation for being liars?—Yes.

127. Do you consider, as a fair man, it was right to judge Miss Howden on these statements, not on oath, of three girls who are admittedly liars?—I did not judge on the statements of the three girls. Mrs. Branting told me that other girls had made similar statements to her. Also, I would point out to you that one of the main factors in causing the Department to ask Miss Howden to resign was her dissatisfaction with the conditions under which she was working here. That in itself was a considerable ground for our action.

128. That was quite a different matter?—No, the two things were considered together.

129. Did you attach any weight to the statements of the girls?—Yes, some weight; and to the fact that Mrs. Branting had told me of the unrest in the Home, and other minor details.

130. Did the other information that Mrs. Branting gave you refer to Mr. Fendall?—No, I do not think it did.

131. Did Mrs. Branting tell you she blamed Miss Howden for giving Mr. Fendall the information?—Not then.

132. But afterwards?—Oh, since she has said she thought it was probable the information had come from Miss Howden.

133. You are satisfied now that Miss Howden had nothing to do with the information given to Mr. Fendall?—I think that has been made clear.

134. With regard to Miss Howden's salary, has Mrs. Scale anything to do with your Department?—Yes, she is the officer who visits children who are boarded out and placed out at situations. She has nothing to do with the Head Office administration.

135. Have you any reason to doubt that Mrs. Scale told Miss Howden that her salary would be £60 per annum?—I know nothing at all about it.

136. There are certain substantial contributions made to this Home at Christmas time by the public?—Yes.