

and examine on oath or otherwise as may be allowed by law, such persons as you think capable of affording you any information in the premises ; and also to call for and examine all such books, documents, papers, or records as you think likely to afford you any information in the premises ; and generally to inquire in the premises by all lawful ways and means whatsoever. And, using all diligence, you are hereby required to report to me, under your hands and seals, your opinion resulting from the inquiry hereby directed in respect of the several matters investigated by you under these presents not later than the 1st day of October, 1897, or such extended date as may hereafter be appointed in that behalf. And it is hereby declared that these presents are subject to the provisions of "The Commissioners' Powers Act, 1867," and its amendments ; and also that these presents and your powers and functions as Commissioners hereunder shall continue in full force notwithstanding that the inquiry hereby directed may be interrupted from time to time by adjournment.

In witness whereof I have hereto set my hand, and caused these presents to be issued under the seal of the said colony, at Wellington, this 3rd day of May, 1897.

Issued in Council.

(L.S.)

JAMES PRENDERGAST.

REPORT.

To His Excellency Sir James Prendergast, Knight, Administrator of the Government, and Chief Justice of the Colony of New Zealand.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

We, the members of the Commission appointed by your Excellency on the 3rd day of May last for the purpose of inquiring into the matters set forth in the petition of Henry McLaughlan, and generally into the working of private benefit societies, the relations existing between employers and their employes in connection with such societies, and the expediency or otherwise of bringing such societies under legislative control, have the honour to report as follows :—

Your Commissioners assembled at Dunedin on Monday, the 17th May, and, after examining witnesses in that city, proceeded to Christchurch, Wellington, and Auckland, in all of which places the constitution and method of working of various societies coming within the scope of your Excellency's Commission were investigated. Altogether, the evidence of 165 witnesses has been taken, to be found to the report appended.

From inquiries made, your Commissioners arrived at the opinion that it was not necessary for them to visit the smaller centres of population, inasmuch as almost every form of private benefit society is represented in the four chief cities, and there are, indeed, few, if any, existent elsewhere in the colony. Nor would an extended tour have, in your Commissioners' opinion, justified them in incurring the expenditure which it would necessarily have involved, seeing that sufficient data for the report were available at the centres named.

At Dunedin the affairs of eight societies were inquired into, at Christchurch nine, at Wellington seven, and at Auckland six, which your Commissioners believe are all the organizations in those cities coming within the scope of the Commission. These were as follows : At Dunedin—Union Steamship Company's Mutual Benefit Society, McLeod Brothers' (Limited) Employes' Mutual Sick Accident Society, Phoenix Company (Limited) Employes' Sick and Accident Society, Sargood, Son, and Ewen's Boot-factory Yearly Benefit Society, Roslyn Worsted and Woollen Mills Yearly Benefit Society, New Zealand Clothing-factory Relief Fund, *Daily Times* Mutual Provident Society, and Kaitangata Railway and Coal Company's Employes' Friendly Society ; at Christchurch—"Zealandia" Boot-factory Employes' Sick Benefit Society, *Lyttelton Times* Sick Fund Society, *Press* Sick Fund, Christchurch Railway Annual Sick Benefit Society, Kaiapoi Clothing-factory Sick and Accident Benefit Society, Christchurch Rail-