

224. Were you ever asked to join the Union Company's society?—Yes.

225. Did you refuse to join?—I made an objection because I was already in a friendly society, but they overruled it.

226. *Mr. Fisher.*] What is your contribution to the Union Company's society?—I pay 4s. 9d. a month; and for the Oddfellows I pay 1s. 4d. per week.

227. Do you belong to the two?—Yes.

228. *The Chairman.*] Do you know if there is any limit of age at which a man can join the Union Company's society?—I think so; I have no personal knowledge of it.

229. What is your object in joining both societies; did you think it would be to your benefit to join the Union Company's society as well?—No; I did not think so. In the first place, I was asked to join the Union Company's service as a "blackleg," but I did not see it. So I waited until some favourable opportunity, and I joined the company, but when I joined I was asked to sign a paper that I did not belong to any other union than the Union Company's society. So that is how I joined the Union Company. When I joined the Union Company's service I signed a paper that I did not belong to any union of a nature detrimental to the Union Company, and I have kept that agreement right throughout these six years I have been in their service. I belong to no union whatever.

230. Do you know of any inducement held out to men to join the Union Company's society?—No; I have not the slightest idea.

231. You have never heard, yourself, of any such argument as this: that if you did not join the society you could not get work from the Union Company?—Yes, I have; but you must put it this way: You want employment; well, if you did not join the benefit society the chances were you would not get a job. It was not a threat, but it was an understood affair. But it was not carried out in my case.

232. Because you did join the society?—Oh, certainly; at once. I said I would join the society as it only meant 5s. a month. If I was sick they would give preference to somebody else.

233. You are perfectly certain they knew you did belong to the Oddfellows?—Well, I cannot exactly substantiate the fact. I told them I was, but I did not show them any books or anything of that kind.

234. Do you know of any man in the Union Company's service who, having formerly belonged to a friendly society, relinquished that society on purpose to join the Union Company's society, seeing that the advantages are equal?—I do not know one case. It might have been, but it did not come under my notice.

235. *Mr. Fisher.*] Have you the printed rules and regulations of the Union Company's society?—Yes; we have them in our books.

236. Is each man supplied with a printed copy of the rules?—Yes.

237. If he does not take care of them—if he loses them it is his own fault?—Yes; but they do not lose them.

238. Do the rules or regulations provide that when a man leaves the Union Company's service he receives what might be called the surrender value of the money he has paid in?—That is a long question; I will answer it to the best of my ability. In the first place, if a man wants to leave the service I do not think he will be so hasty as to demand his surrender value at once. There are two reasons for that. In the first place, he does not get an equivalent for the money he has paid in, and, in the second place, you have to state what the grievance has been, and why you have been "sacked," and why you are leaving the society.

239. That is a condition first of all?—Yes; it all stands on that.

240. A man leaving the society, if he has been discharged for some fault, would not be considered on the same footing as a man who left of his own free will?—Undoubtedly not; there must be some fault or fault-finding if you would curtail the bonuses or benefits. If a man leaves of his own free will to better himself or go ashore I think he should be paid one-third, which is provided, two-thirds being for expenses; that is to say, if you are benefited £3, you only get £1.

241. But the point is this: Suppose a man says, "I wish to leave the service of this company. I may have had a difference with the company or with its officers, and there may be a little feeling between myself and the boss." Is it then the latter's prerogative to say whether that man shall receive his surrender value or not?—I do not think so. The benefits belong to the men themselves. So far as my knowledge goes, we are a body collected together, and we say we will make certain rules and regulations, and contribute so much, and distribute so much. There is no one else other than the men we appoint ourselves, such as the president or vice-president. We all contribute alike, and we all get alike.

242. I wish to know what happens in case of a difference. Suppose you say, "I wish to leave the service of the company," is it then within your right to demand your one-third surrender value?—Yes, I think so.

243. Are you paid it if you demand it in any case?—I think that is a case of law.

244. Then the right is not clear?—I do not think so; you might demand it and I might demand it, but the trouble is, we have not the deciding of the matter.

245. *The Chairman.*] Suppose, for instance, a man in the Union Company's service was mutinous, or otherwise misbehaved himself, the company could punish the man by discharging him? I am not speaking of the benefit society but of the company. They could not carry the matter further; they have no means of interfering in the friendly societies, so that they have no power to make his friendly society punish him also?—They have none whatever.

246. *Mr. Fisher.*] Have the men, in the event of leaving the service through a difference with their employers, the undoubted—the indubitable—right to claim their surrender value or whatever you call it before leaving the service?—So far as I know, that has been the rule; the men have claimed their surrender value, and have got it.