

the committee of management should be enlarged so as to transfer the balance of power to the members of the society, instead of resting as it now does with the company.

*The Colonial Sugar Company's Societies.*

There are two societies in connection with the Colonial Sugar-refining Company, which has its head-quarters in Sydney, and which has numerous branches. One of these societies is a sick benefit society, the other a provident fund. The first, the benefit society, is registered in Sydney under the Friendly Societies Act of New South Wales. It has a wide scale of benefits in return for a very moderate subscription, and meets with the general approval of the employés. Membership is purely voluntary. Your Commissioners have no suggestion to offer for the improvement of the rules. The employés' provident fund is on a very different footing. It is registered under an indenture, to which the members subscribe their names, and membership is compulsory as regards the salaried staff, but is stated by rule to be optional as regards all other employés. In view of the allegations of the petition referred to in your Excellency's Commission, it became necessary for your Commissioners to inquire very fully into this point, the petitioner asserting that compulsion is exercised, the above rule notwithstanding, through preference of employment being given to men who are members of the provident society as against those who decline to become members. On the part of the company this is denied; but the evidence of the majority of the witnesses goes to show that there is, at any rate, a belief on their part that such a preference is exercised, at least when it becomes necessary to shorten the number of hands. Always assuming that the rule as to voluntary membership be faithfully given effect to, your Commissioners are of opinion that the fund is a desirable one, and they draw attention to the fact that it is very liberally aided by the company, which gave an original donation of £2,000, and subsidises subscribers' contributions at the rate of pound for pound up to a limit of £3,000 a year. There is also a very liberal surrender value, a contributor for five years or more being entitled on leaving to withdraw the whole of his contributions, and a contributor, if he leave prior to the expiration of five years, to the refund of half his contribution. If he is discharged at any time (except for fraud or dishonesty) he is refunded his contributions in full. The fact, however, that the whole of the accumulated funds is invested with the company is, in your Commissioners' opinion, unsatisfactory, and they think that that moiety of the fund which represents the subscriptions of the employés should be invested in outside securities.

In reference to the petition of Henry McLaughlan, your Commissioners consider that the petitioner's sworn evidence did not sustain the charges made in the petition, as it appears he was not discharged as he alleged, but he himself applied to be discharged, and was allowed to remain on in the company's service so as to be able to claim the amount paid by him for five years into the provident fund. It appears that indirect pressure was brought upon the men to induce them to sign certain petitions against the Private Benefit Societies Bills as they year after year appeared before Parliament, but such action does not really touch the scope of this inquiry, as it was apparently more of a political character than affecting the constitution or administration of either the Sugar Company's benefit societies, and said petitions being signed under the belief that the Bills petitioned against would put an end to both the sick benefit society and the provident fund.

*Lyttelton Times Sick Fund Society.*

This society is one in regard to which your Commissioners have pleasure in expressing their satisfaction, the regulations placing the entire control in the hands of the members, and membership being purely voluntary. The advantages which the society afford are clearly recognised by the employés of the *Lyttelton Times* Company, as, of a total number of 125 employés, no less than 112 have joined the society, the small remainder being probably either members of registered friendly societies or juvenile employés. At its inception the society received a donation of £100 as a contribution to its funds from the late Hon. W.