

Act repealed, or the hours lengthened, or the Saturday half-holiday done away with. I was speaking to the other young women in our department about the Saturday half-holiday, and they say if the half-holiday were taken from us it would have the effect of keeping us at home on Sunday, depriving us of any exercise on Saturday, or of the opportunity of doing a little work for ourselves at home. Then, some of the girls come from Mosgiel and other places, and they would have to wait for the midnight train. I was in the employment of ————. I was employed at this work before the Act was brought in, but have not had much experience before that time. I am quite satisfied with the Act, and with the way it is carried out by my present employers. We used to be kept by my former employers sometimes after hours on Saturdays, but not by our own free will. If we had refused we should have lost our places. It was when there was certain work to be finished, and the forewoman insisted on our staying, although the proprietor told us to go. It is the forewoman who engages or discharges the hands. We did not get paid for that overtime. The forewoman superintends the work. I know there is an Inspector under the Act. He only came once to the place I was formerly in. It was after that the proprietors were fined; but even subsequent to that we were kept a little late, without pay. We used to think the inspection insufficient.

Miss ———— (b.) examined, stated:—

172. I am an employée in the establishment of ————. I am over sixteen years of age. I have been eleven years in the establishment. We commence work at 9 a.m. and end at 6 p.m., Saturdays excepted, when we leave off at 2 p.m. We have an hour for dinner, from 1 to 2. The work is all dress-making in our room, in which there are twenty-four hands, and as many in the mantle room; the youngest is about fourteen. There are four apprentices, who commenced under fourteen. All get an hour for dinner. A great many stay on the premises during the hour, as they live so far away. There are no conveniences for dinner. There are only two machinists; all the rest are employed sewing. With the exception of one or two, the machinists get rather more wages than others. All are paid by the week. There is a female superintendent and a second hand in each department. The best ordinary hands get from 20s. to 26s.; one or two, 30s. I get 40s. The employment is perfectly healthy. Our present room is very comfortable. The old one was not so good. We get paid for the four holidays mentioned in the Act; the others are deducted from our wages. If we stay away half a day it is deducted. They all understand that. There was a notice posted up in the old room, but it has not yet been posted up in the new one. All, however, understand what the provisions of the Act are, and cannot be imposed on. We have never had any difficulty in regard to the Act. Before it was brought in we suffered enough; but are now independent, and feel thankful every day of our lives for the Act. We think the Act protects us fairly. We have not the advantages that men have of getting into unions. Before the Act we never got away before 12 o'clock on Saturday night. The Saturday work in our room is very well managed. The superintendent arranges the work and engages the hands. If she told us to stay we should have to do so. Although before the Act we were working till all hours, both on Saturdays and other days as well, the wages were just the same as now—nothing was allowed for overtime. Many used to be sick and in bad health in consequence of being overworked; and some had to go to other work, not being able to stand it. The Saturday half-holiday has been a great advantage physically. We have about the same number of hands as before. We get just as much work done, perhaps more, than in the ten hours previously; the girls work constantly during the eight hours, whereas before they would perhaps idle the time away, knowing that they had to remain so long a time, and would say, "Oh! we might just as well take our time over it." We are perfectly satisfied with the law as it is, and are very thankful for it.

Miss ———— (c.) examined, stated:—

173. I am a dressmaker at ————. We commence work at 9 a.m., and leave off at 6 p.m. We have an hour for dinner. About twenty-four hands are working in our room. They are all, I think, over fourteen years of age. There are three apprentices. The apprenticeship lasts a twelve-month, when that is up they get higher wages. I am always sewing—hand-sewing. We have not to sit all day. There are two machines in our room. The employment is healthy. The wages of some are from 20s. to 26s. There is no piecework, and none of them get piecework to take home. We have a machine at home, but do not work it for pay—merely for our own use. I was working before the passing of the Act nearly a year. The hours then were from 9 in the morning till sometimes 10 at night, often till 9, without extra pay. We were compelled to work; if we had refused, I suppose we should have had to leave. If such had been the case, there would have been no difficulty in filling our places. I am in favour of the half-holiday. I am in favour of the Act altogether, just as it is. The young persons quite understand how many hours they are to work, although no notice is posted up in the workroom. If the work is badly done, we just get a scolding—the wages are not stopped. The factory is very well managed. I have no complaints to make.

Miss ———— (d.) examined, stated:—

174. I am working for ————, and have been in the establishment for two years. There is a good deal of machine-work done. Two machinists are employed. The workroom is very comfortable. The women generally do certainly consider the Act a very great protection. I was only working for a short time before it came into operation. I should not like to see the holidays done away with. We feel the benefit of the Act every day. The employer is very good in cases of sickness. If otherwise we miss a day it is deducted from our wages. We are not kept beyond the hours now; we were some time ago. We never received a penny for overtime.

Miss ———— (e.) examined, stated:—

175. I am employed at hand-sewing in the establishment of ————. About twenty-five hands are working in the same room. None are under fourteen, I think. I am quite satisfied with the pro-