

1894.
NEW ZEALAND.

LABOUR BILLS COMMITTEE.

(MINUTES OF EVIDENCE TAKEN BEFORE THE COMMITTEE IN THE MATTER OF THE MASTER AND APPRENTICE BILL No. 2, TOGETHER WITH APPENDICES.)

Presented to the House of Representatives, and ordered to be printed.

ORDER OF REFERENCE.

Extract from the Journals of the House of Representatives.

MONDAY, THE 22ND DAY OF OCTOBER, 1894.

Ordered, "That the evidence taken before the Labour Bill Committee, relative to the Master and Apprentice Bill (No. 2), be printed and circulated amongst the various employers, associations, and labour organizations throughout the colony."—(Mr. PINKERTON.)

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

FRIDAY, 31ST AUGUST, 1894.—Mr. PINKERTON, Chairman.

JAMES MACKAY examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—I am chief clerk of the Labour Department.

2. We are prepared to hear what you have to say in regard to this Bill, in favour or otherwise.

Mr. Mackay: Judging from the general provisions of the Bill, I think it will be very useful in regard to masters and apprentices connected with the different trades. There are several trades which, in my opinion, will benefit by this Bill if it should become law, or some such law. There are two especially. One of these is the printing trade. I think that an Act of this sort will very much benefit that trade, because it is so overrun with what is called boy-labour. Young men, or boys, are being taken on as apprentices to this trade without any indenture or binding arrangement. They are taken on at very low wages. After they have served for two or three years, perhaps, they ask for an increase of wages or salary. There are many masters who will then say, "We cannot afford to keep you any longer." The result is these young men are discharged. I am aware that many masters will not do this. These young men, most of them about eighteen or nineteen years of age, when they have been so discharged, enter into competition with outside labour. They are neither apprentices nor journeymen, and they have to go to some other shop at low wages. They thus compete with men who have served six or seven years to the trade. The result of this competition is to bring down the prices in every branch of the printing trade to very much less than the standard rates. These young men cannot be said to have learned the trade. They are not properly trained tradesmen. The consequence is that the standard of efficiency is very much reduced. Then, there is the cabinet-making trade. In this city there are scores of young men who have served in one shop for two, or, may be, three years, and then get discharged because the employer says he cannot keep them on any longer. They have not in any sense become efficient tradesmen. They also compete with the trained journeymen in this trade. They work for £1 10s. or £1 15s. a week, whereas the current rate of wages would be £3. The effect of this practice is to reduce wages all round. A master will keep one or, perhaps, two competent men to do the finer class of work, and will use these "improvers," as this class of men are called, for the ordinary work; meanwhile, men who have served a full legal apprenticeship are walking about the streets, and cannot get employment. In the Labour Department we are constantly having the same complaints brought before us. Men in all trades are constantly coming to me and complaining of the extent to which the so-called boy-labour interferes with the fully-trained mechanic. In conversation with many of these young men themselves, I find that they have been employed for two or three years at a trade, and having served that period they are got rid of. Take the boot-trade, for another instance of young men and boys being employed without any indenture or anything to bind them or the masters for a sufficient time, so as to thoroughly learn

the trade. After a year or two they are discharged. They are not fit for the better class of work, and they must seek other employment. They come to the department asking work in all sorts of capacities. Half-trained printers, cabinet-makers, and others come to us for bush-felling, road-making, and, in fact, for anything they can get to do. As they are not properly-trained journeymen at the trade to which they served for a short time, they are glad to tackle anything for a living. The effect is that the labour market is overstocked. This inferior labour in many cases shuts out the skilled workman, then they too have to seek other work. Men of every branch of labour come to me with these complaints. I have been able to employ many of them in bush-felling, road-making, and other work. Young men of this sort come to me from nearly every trade with the exception of engineers. I find that engineers, in the majority of cases, do have indentured apprentices. In some cases premiums are paid to the employer with the indenture by the parent or guardian.

3. *Dr. Newman.*] How much?—From £20 to £50—that is, in Wellington. I therefore think it is better, as this Act intends that all apprentices going to learn any trade should be indentured for a number of years; they would then become skilful workmen. In the plumbing trade, in this town, boy-labour is very much to the front. I know of one place where seven boys, from fifteen to nineteen years of age, are employed to one man. As a rule, when these boys are two or three years at the trade they are discharged, and other boys taken on in their place. There are, however, some shops in this trade where they will not employ any other than properly-trained men. They will only have apprentices whom they train themselves for the proper period, and who have been indentured to them, or journeymen who have served the usual time under indenture elsewhere. These employers do not want to have anything to do with other than properly-trained men. They bind their apprentices for five years and treat them properly, sending them to technical schools. There is one shop in the city where the employer does everything he can to encourage his apprentices to learn their trade, setting apart one of his workshops so that they can come back in the evening to study the various branches of the trade.

4. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] You have been with the Labour Department about three years?—Yes; three years.

5. In your opinion, is the proportion of boy and girl labour to adult labour decreasing or increasing?—I think it is increasing. Talking about female labour in the large cities—in the dress-making trade especially—it is multiplying at a terrible rate. There are places in this town, Dunedin, Auckland, and Christchurch, and other places where they advertise for young girls as apprentices. The young girl answers one of these advertisements. She is taken on, and she finds she has to work six months for nothing. At the end of six months they give her 2s. 6d. a week; during the following year, or eighteen months, perhaps, they raise her wages to 3s., 5s., or 6s. a week.

6. *Captain Russell.*] In twelve or eighteen months?—If she asks, as she has every reason to do, for 8s., 10s., or 12s. a week she is discharged, some excuse being given. Some cases are worse than that, for immediately after the six months of service for nothing they are liable to be discharged, on the excuse that times are dull, or they are incompetent; and at the end of the six months during which they are employed at 2s. 6d. a week a great many of them are discharged. Thus we find continually girls floating about, from fourteen to sixteen and seventeen years of age, who, having served six months for nothing and six months for 2s. 6d. a week, are discharged, because they have wanted a little more money for their work: but, owing to the excessive competition, the employers say they cannot pay these girls any more. Thus we are getting on all sides an incompetent class of workers.

7. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] Do you know any establishment in which the average rate of wages of a large number of the women there employed, are from top to bottom very poor?—The tailoresses average wages are pretty good. Tailoresses work by a log; most of them are piece-workers, that is, so much for each garment. If they get plenty of work they make good wages. In some establishments in the dressmaking trade the women work for a weekly wage, but this weekly wage is very low. In one place I know, employing about twenty dressmakers, the average weekly wage might be about eight or nine shillings per week.

8. *Captain Russell.*] Any food included? No.

9. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] Are there any places in New Zealand where these logs are not strictly obeyed?—Well, employers say they work according to the log and get log-prices, but girls tell me privately that in some lines they do not.

10. About this looseness in working to the log, and obtaining log-prices: are there some places worse than others?—I suppose Auckland is about the worst place.

11. In the case of a girl, say from seventeen years old to adult age, have you any notion what it would cost for that girl's support?—If she were living by herself, and if she chose to take a furnished room (she could get a room at say from 5s. to 7s. a week), it would cost about 8s. a week to keep her in food. It might possibly be done at 7s. Then there is the matter of clothing in addition. I should say she could not keep herself for 15s. a week.

12. Then, beside clothes, there are trifles which everybody wants occasionally, and which must be paid for; even the most penurious persons must spend something outside the bare necessities of life?—I could not say what it might cost for clothing.

13. Supposing you had been informed by the experience of others who had much to do with this class of workers, or by the general experience you had obtained through your own observation, that it took 18s. a week for a female over seventeen to live all the year round in decent comfort, would you think that extravagant, or that such a statement was exaggerated?—It can be done for less; I know girls that live for 13s. a week, but that is not including clothing.

14. But I want an answer, including everything?—I would not say that 15s., 16s., or 18s. would be too much.

15. Do you know any establishment in which a large majority of the female workers of all ages

do not get 18s. a week?—Oh, yes, any amount of them. I know a girl in Wellington who receives 10s. a week, and she keeps herself on that, including clothing; but she does not look as if she were very well fed.

16. There are a large number of operatives who do not earn enough weekly to keep themselves independent?—A large number.

17. You say there are a great many in that position?—Yes, I believe they are in the majority; they do not make enough to live decently on. Of course there are some, but only a few, women in the dressmaking trade who receive large salaries, but the majority of dressmakers do not receive enough to live on in decent comfort nor anything like it.

18. Would you kindly tell us how they manage to live; would it be correct to say that they live on their families and friends largely?—A great many of them have a furnished room, and visit their friends, relatives, and so on, on holidays, where, perhaps, they get their dinner and tea. When they go visiting in this way it saves them a good deal in cost of food. I have no doubt this is practised to a considerable extent. When these young girls can go to friends to tea on a Sunday, or two or three days in the week, it makes a great difference to them in the cost of living.

19. The community, then, support these people more or less—is that the effect of it?—Personal friends do. Then, again, some of these girls club together: Two, three, or four of them will make a co-operative business of it, calculating that, clubbing their funds together, the cost of two or three together would not be more than the rate for one and a half taken singly; they find this cheaper.

20. Are you of opinion that this practice of not indenturing young people, but, instead, using their labour two or three years and then turning them off, accounts for a good deal of the complaints of bad workmanship, and for some of the poor work of which we sometimes hear?—I think it is the main factor.

21. We now come back to the boys. You spoke of the practice in the plumbers' trade of employers taking boys on for two or three years and then getting rid of them. That is not the only trade in which such a practice prevails?—No; that is not the only trade.

22. What is the favourite age at which boys are taken on like that?—Fourteen or fifteen years; that is the age they mostly get them. The reason I spoke about the plumbers' trade particularly was that some of the work is so intricate and fine that they are obliged to have the most skilled men, who have served their time in England, to do it. There is not so much lead work required here as in England. It is mostly iron or zinc work that is done, and this kind of work does not require the skill that lead does. They can get boys, after two or three years' service, to do this iron and zinc work as well as a man; they can do ridging and like work as well as the skilled tradesman.

23. That is, these boys can get up to be good rough assistants?—Yes, after two or three years, if they want higher wages they are discharged or paid off. But employers are not all like that in the plumbing trade. There are some good shops in that trade. There is one in the city here, as I have stated, where they prefer to get journeymen from the Old Country. They prefer them to the colonial trained men, unless they have brought the young men up under their own training. With a view to having journeymen of their own training, they indenture their apprentices and treat them well; they have classes for these boys so that they may be taught every branch of the trade. They come back at nights and the employers give them a workshop to enable them to practise and improve themselves in the trade.

24. Do you mean that the average colonial youth is not likely to become as good workmen as the English trained workmen?—Not under present conditions.

25. Do you think that inferiority is due to any laziness or want of intelligence?—I do not think so. I think that the colonial youth are just as smart and quite as intelligent; but they want technical instruction and a sound system of training.

26. Do you say that at present we are turning out a race of merely half-skilled labourers?—That is what I find; I am confirmed in this view from my observation of the men who come to me at the Labour Department seeking employment.

27. You say that these young men who have been turned out after two or three years service come back to you to apply for rough manual labour; do you think these young men are any the better for the two or three years' service they have gone through? Are they any better for the time they have given to the shops in town?—Young men are good at any work so long as they are young and can adapt themselves to a country life. They are as good as if they had been in the country all their life, but it is not so with a man who has got well up in years.

28. In the large towns of the colony do you find that there are five or six different prices ruling for skilled work?—Yes; Auckland is about the worst, and has been—

29. *Captain Russell.*] You mean the worst-paying?—As a rule they are paid lower prices in Auckland. It is said, however, that rent and the cost of living are much lower there than in other parts of the colony. Wellington, however, has obtained the supremacy for high prices for skilled labour and wages generally.

30. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] You say "it is said" that they can live cheaper in Auckland than in other places; is the department able to prove that?—We do know that rents are cheaper there, and that is a very large item in the cost of living.

31. Is rent cheaper there than in Otago or Canterbury?—Yes.

32. Than in Wellington?—Wellington is the highest place.

33. With regard to the proportion of the number of children to adults, is there any difference in that respect; is there any greater tendency towards the employment of merely young people in one place more than another?—I have not noticed it in that way.

34. With regard to the condition in which these people are living, I mean the sanitary con-

ditions and the surrounding arrangements made for their general health. Do you find that there is any difference in that respect?—Yes; there is a good deal of difference in different districts.

35. Now, with regard to the best means of dealing with the child labour question: in this Act we will have an indenture system, it is proposed to indenture all apprentices to skilled trades; but it has been suggested that instead of doing that it would be better to have an Order-in-Council to prescribe the proportion of young people to adults in each trade, and not to insist on the indenture system at all?—Yes; but then if an employer chose to indenture half-a-dozen boys to one man it would not make much difference; it might be that they would be turned out trained and skilled workmen, but it would not prevent one employer having half-a-dozen boys to one man.

36. Suppose he had to keep them, and see that they were decently instructed, would there not be an advantage in that?—I believe that the majority of employers would rather turn out workmen that had been trained by themselves; that is to say, young men who were bound to them for a term of years.

37. *Captain Russell.*] Why do they not do it now?—Because they have not thought of it; there is not yet the competition of employers for labour of that kind.

38. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] Do you think the trades will accept this Bill in a fairly good spirit?—I do; employers, as a rule, I think, will be favourable to it. There are, no doubt, some employers who think of nothing but getting as much as they can out of their workpeople, but I do not think such employers are in the majority.

39. It would mean that in teaching their trade they would have to pass the apprentice on from branch to branch of the business?—Yes.

40. *Dr. Newman.*] Do you think this Bill, if it becomes law, will greatly ameliorate the condition of apprentices?—I think it will: there are one or two things in the Bill which I think could be amended, as for instance, in clause 16, where it says that no other than the handicraft-apprentice who is entitled, &c. [Clause read.]

An Hon. Member.] The handicraft-apprentice is working under the Factories Act.

41. Would you mention any other improvement?—There is clause 20 where the expert has to give his report. [Clause read.] If a boy is not properly trained. I think that will want safeguarding. We have spiteful boys, who, if they are examined before a Magistrate, would make themselves appear to be incompetent, for the purpose of getting the employer into trouble. Then there is the dull boy, who is not speedy in picking up the trade. He would not show the same progress as the smarter boy. It would be hard on the employer if a spiteful boy brought him up for no reason, but that the boy tried to make himself appear more ignorant than he really was.

42. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] I presume the master would also have the opportunity of giving his reasons to the contrary?—Yes; then there is clause 21, in which power is given to the Magistrate to cancel a boy's indenture; we know that boys are sometimes mischievous, even malicious. But these same boys often turn out to be good men. He might be had up for some offence of which the Magistrate would take a specially severe view. He would cancel the indenture, and perhaps, ruin the boy for life.

43. Should not the Magistrate have power to relieve the employer of an incorrigible apprentice?—Yes; but I think if there were some one associated with the Magistrate in awarding such punishment it would be better. Then, as regards the payment schedule, I think the first two ratios in the schedule somewhat excessive.

44. *Dr. Newman.*] Can you suppose a case where, according to the pay schedule, an apprentice would get to be entitled to 60 or 70 per cent. of the standard wages for adult skilled labour. Might not there be an inducement found in this Bill by an employer who wanted to get rid of the boys when they became entitled to this large percentage?—You must recollect that a boy in the sixth year of his apprenticeship is nearly as good as a journeyman—at least, he ought to be; therefore, 75 per cent. is not excessive for him to receive; but for the first two or three years I think the percentage is excessive. It is certainly not excessive in the sixth year, for the reason that the apprentice is as good as the journeyman.

45. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] In the cabinet and in the building trades they take on a boy, say, at 5s. a week, and give him a rise each subsequent year, so that when he attains his sixth year of apprenticeship he gets £1 10s. a week, which is just half what the first-class skilled adult gets?—Carpenters' wages here are nominally 10s. a day, but, as a rule, they are getting only from 6s. to 10s. a day; there are few carpenters who get 10s. a day.

46. *Dr. Newman.*] Do you think it would be an advantage to choose a number of boys proportionate to the number of men employed—the Railway Commissioners have done that?—Still the employer might have half-a-dozen boys to one man.

47. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] Have you seen the schedule of this confidential Bill, which was drawn up by the Trades and Labour Council and has been distributed among the trades?—I have seen it.

48. Did you think it was practical?—I thought it was impractical.

48A. *Dr. Newman.*] My attention has been drawn to the fact that there is a great deal of sweating going on outside of factories. Has that come under your observation at all?—Yes; there is a great deal of that going on; a number of women take work to their own homes.

49. I meant chiefly from the factory?—Yes; take Sargoods, for example: Say, they want a thousand shirts made. They go to the registered factory; they pay 1s. a shirt to the person who is running the factory. The person running the registered factory then sublets to people working in their own homes, say, at 6d. per shirt; they, by working from dawn to dark, will probably earn 10s. to 15s. a week. [NOTE.—The name of firm and prices are only given as examples, not that Sargood's firm does this, or pays the price quoted.]

50. *Captain Russell.*] Do you think that is growing?—Yes; it is growing. As we get more civilised these things grow.

51. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] Do I understand you to say that the general condition is a tendency to

excessive hours even where the wages are scarcely sufficient to support life?—That is the only way they can support it—by working all these hours.

51A. Do they work together in any number?—There are generally two or three. There may be a mother and daughter, or perhaps a mother and two daughters; perhaps one or both have been working in a factory all day at dressmaking, or other work; when they come home they start with the sewing-machine after they have had their tea. They rarely go out for exercise; and they work at the machine for a good number of hours.

52. *Dr. Newman.*] Will not the effect of a Bill like this be to increase this cottage industry unless some other conditions are added to control it; for instance, a master might have a number of girls apprenticed; would not the tendency be in such a case, that he might shut up his shop and have this work done at their home, which would tend to the sweating we sometimes hear of?—The new Factory Act would fix that up, for then all goods will be marked “Tenement Made”; public opinion, I should say, will be against purchasing “tenement made” goods.

53. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] How many under the new Act will constitute a factory—two, is it not?—Two; so that the mother and daughter, or mother and two daughters would come within the provisions of the Factory Act.

54. *Dr. Newman.*] Is it not the tendency of trades unions, instead of requiring apprenticeship, rather to provide a personal test of competency, so that any man can be a tradesman who chooses to qualify?—I do not think so; there are things in almost every trade which you cannot learn properly except by practice; mere examination will not do it; you must serve a practical apprenticeship to obtain a competent knowledge; many things occur in practice which you have not time to examine, and with which only a trained man can deal.

55. Take my own profession, for instance, in which apprentices have been entirely done away to the great advantage of the profession?—I cannot speak as to that.

56. Have you been connected with any trade?—In my youth I served part of my time as a plumber; I was afterwards employed at sea.

57. Then you speak with expert knowledge?—I have mingled with a great number of men, and have gathered information from almost every trade. In the position I now hold, I hear from almost every kind of workman the condition of nearly every kind of work.

58. Can you tell me what is the relative price now of this boy-labour and adult-labour?—You mean as between the skilled workman and the sums which are paid to improvers? In the printing-trade I know that employers in Wellington are paying some men 18s. and 20s. a week; these are young men whom I have already described, and are taking the place of skilled workmen, who should be receiving £3 a week.

59. That is less than one-half? Some may get 25s. or 30s. a week, but about a pound is the average of what they do get. It is the same in the plumbing-trade. I know of boys or young men who have a very imperfect knowledge of the trade, yet filling the places of journeymen who have been properly trained, for 3s. 6d. or 4s. a day, whereas the wages of a skilled workman is 9s. or 10s. a day.

60. *Captain Russell.*] How is the rate of percentage in the third schedule fixed; or, do you know why those rates were fixed? I could not say why they were so fixed.

61. Have you thought as to the necessity of paying wages at all to the apprentice during the first year: does the employer find him in material, and practically does the boy earn anything the first year? Oh, I think he does in most trades. There are few trades in which a boy cannot be of use to a man during the first year; in some trades he may be of great use even the first week. In most cases a boy works with a man and can be of use in various ways. In fact, if he only holds things for the workman, he is of use. I, therefore, think the boy would be entitled to something for the first year.

62. The improvers again, do they get paid the first year?—Yes.

62A. Can you tell me what is the practice in the other colonies?—I think it is very much the same as here. I hear of similar complaints in the other colonies made by those who have been driven out by the conditions of the labour market there. There are trades which have been almost ruined in consequence of boy-labour being unrestricted.

63. Have they no system of apprenticeship; do you know whether that is so or not?—No legal system to my knowledge.

64. What effect do you imagine this scale of percentage in the pay schedule is likely to have on the wages of adult labour?—I think, as I have said before, it is excessive in the first two rates; it is possible that if the employer looked on the rate as excessive he might reduce the wages of the adult labour.

65. Then you think it might have a tendency to reduce the wages of the adult workman?—I do not mean the ratio fixed for the later years; I was referring to the first two or three years. The further the youth advances in his apprenticeship the more valuable his services become to the master. An apprentice in the fifth or sixth year of his service is almost as good as the adult workman. I do not think the ratio fixed for those two periods at all excessive.

66. Can you give us some idea of the excess to which you refer?—Say, for the first three years it might be 10 per cent., 20 per cent., and 25 per cent., instead of 14 per cent., 25 per cent., and 35 per cent. For the later periods I do not think the rates at all excessive.

67. Will this compulsory apprenticeship have any effect on young people generally? If you compel handicraft labour to be worked in the manner provided in this Bill, will it not be likely to lead to a good deal of trouble?—It will be all the better for themselves.

68. Those who are not apprenticed?—If this Bill becomes law every handicraft person will have to be apprenticed; it will be only unskilled labour outside.

69. Do you think this will increase the number of young people in employment, or will it diminish the number?—I do not think it will either diminish or increase the number.

70. Can you give us any idea of the hours of shop-assistants?—There are girls in Wellington who start working at 8 a.m. or 9 a.m., and work on until 6 p.m. They get 15s. a week. I should say the average age would be about eighteen years. Counting girls that go for the first year or part of the first year, they go for very much less than 15s. a week. They get, perhaps, a rise at the end of the first year; but, taking the average all round, from the lowest to the highest, it is about from 16s. to 18s. a week. Of course, there are some women in shops who get very high salaries, as much, perhaps, as £2, £3, and £4 per week.

71. What proportion of girls get under 15s. a week?—I should say about 60 per cent.

72. Then, in the matter of factory-girls, what is their average?—Tailoresses, as I have said, work to a log; there are some who will earn from £1 10s. to £2 a week, if they have full employment; there are others who make 18s., 17s., or as low as 9s. or 10s. a week.

73. What proportion of factory-hands work for under 15s. a week?—I should say 80 to 90 per cent.

78. What effect has this on the social condition of the girls?—Well, it does not tend to raise it; for, if a girl is here by herself, and she has no home, she must pay for a lodging for herself and to live under conditions which exposes her to many dangers which lead to immorality or to an unfortunate marriage; for, in such circumstances, she would probably be easily induced to accept the first offer of marriage.

75. Is there any reason to think that this state of things actually induces to immorality?—It does, I believe; but only to a very slight extent. I think that girls out here have a higher moral tone than girls of the same class in the Old Country. They do not give way readily to immorality for the sake of gain; but there is no doubt that, in a small degree, it does tend that way.

76. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] Coming back to the subject of apprentices, suppose the case of a man having six apprentices. Would it be possible, in such circumstances, for the apprentices to be properly taught their trade?—They would not have the same chance. They would not be properly taught. It takes an adult who is efficient in his trade to teach a boy properly. It is the man who is the teacher, not the employer.

77. Does that point in the direction that there ought to be a limit to the number?—Yes; I think it does.

78. *Captain Russell.*] Would not that affect the number of persons who go into the trade? Would not those who go into that trade now, then go into some other?—Yes; and under the present system it would be better, for we would have more young men who, finding themselves unsuited or unable to get into a particular trade, would push into the country. If we had more young men going in for a country life it would be all the better for themselves and the colony as well.

79. Can you give us the effect on prices that would result?—I think it would tend to raise wages. People would pay better prices.

80. In the case of a man going to build a house, would the contract be affected favourably or unfavourably for the man who has to pay for it?—I do not think it would tend to increase the price. If it did, better workmanship would compensate for any increase.

81. This Act would apply to all registered factories; how would it affect country tradesmen whose trade fluctuates so much in the course of the year?—I do not think it would make any difference.

82. He would perhaps require for the purposes of his business a large number of hands this month and very few the next month?—I think he would have a very good idea of his trade requirements from one year's end to the other. He knows what amount of labour he is likely to want, and he could always get it.

83. Is there any further information that you could give the Committee?—I think that is about all the information that I can give the Committee on this Bill.

The Chairman: I know of my own knowledge all the facts which Mr. Mackay has stated, and indeed worse than he has stated. I know that in some of the most respectable shops in Dunedin, in some even of the highest class, they give their young women nothing for the first twelve months, and then only the smallest sum upon which these young persons can barely live; or if the employer has to pay more for special skill, after a while he reduces the amount of wage to less and less, until at last they are starved out altogether.

84. *Captain Russell.*] Is it considered a favour by some of these young girls to get into a factory?—Yes; girls do not like going into domestic service; they mostly all go into shops. There is one place in Wellington which is like a nursery, owing to the number of very young girls who are employed there. These girls are brought together by advertisement in the manner I have stated; most of them are in their first year of service, and get no wages; the person running this place, consequently, gets their labour for nothing.

WEDNESDAY, 5TH SEPTEMBER, 1894.

Mrs. GRACE NEILL, Inspector of Factories, examined.

1. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] How long have you been connected with the Labour Department, one way or another, Mrs. Neill?—More than a year.

2. When were you appointed as Inspector?—In March.

3. Since then you have visited factories in Wellington and elsewhere?—Yes; in Wellington, New Plymouth, Auckland, and Masterton.

4. Of course, your attention has been chiefly directed to the state of female workers?—Yes.

5. A very large proportion of these, I believe, are under twenty-one years of age?—Yes; by far the largest.

6. Are these young people—girls—what you would call apprentices in the proper sense of the term? Supposed to be learning a trade?—Yes. There are many different branches of female labour, and each of them is distinct. In dressmaking there are by far the largest number of women employed; and there the apprentices earn very little. They are called apprentices for the first year. In private establishments after the first six months they get 2s. 6d. a week; in the larger establishments, nothing for the first year, and then 5s. a week, and rise gradually.

7. They do not, of course, invariably go on?—No; for the first year they learn next to nothing, as their work is continually running up and down stairs and doing messages; and if they are worth nothing they are sent away, but if they appear bright and intelligent they are kept on. The proportion is about two apprentices to fifteen, but they do not learn the trade.

8. When you say two to fifteen, do you mean that all the fifteen hands are adults?—No; improvers out of their apprenticeship—out of their time.

9. What would be their time?—I tried to find out that. They call a year their time; but that year means running messages, which is not learning a trade.

10. Then, a girl out of her time in the dressmaking would really be only beginning to learn the trade. It is exactly the reverse to the printing trade, where a boy is supposed to have learnt his trade when he is out of his time?—Yes.

11. What is the position of the mass of these so-called improvers? I presume the larger number of the employés are what are called improvers?—Yes.

12. Can you give some idea of their wages?—From 5s. they rise to 7s. 6d. next year, and so on to 15s., which would be a good average wage for a dressmaker.

13. You think that is the average wage in the dressmaking, taking it altogether?—I do not mean those in charge of the room. They are skilled, and are supposed to be artistes, who get from £6 to £10; perhaps £6 to £8 would be nearer the highest in New Zealand. Then, there is a tremendous step down to £1 5s., after which £1, 17s. 6d., 15s., and so on to 5s.

14. What are the hours?—Just exactly the eight hours.

15. Is there much work done outside?—Very little dressmaking is done outside; it is all done in the workshop; but in the tailoring there is a good deal sent outside. The facts are not easily got at. In the tailoring there are two distinct branches. In the "order" trade the wages for machinists are £1 5s. to £1, and they are rather higher than the English rates; but, with the cost of living considered, they are really less than English rates. The union rates are: First class, £1 5s.; second class, £1; third class, 15s.; and fourth class, 10s. Then there is "slop tailoring," in which a girl at the end of the first year would get 10s. Directly she enters the factory she commences to earn 2s. 6d. per week, then on to 5s. and at the end of the year, when they are earning 10s., they have learnt one branch, and can make either coats, trousers, or vests. If a girl chooses, then she can begin to learn another branch at the lower wage, but very few girls will do so, they will rather go on with the 10s., rising gradually in one branch, than learn the whole trade.

16. At what age do they generally begin to learn the slop trade?—I think about fifteen everywhere.

17. What would they be earning after having been there eighteen months?—I have here an agreement for a girl who has been apprenticed, which has the schedule of wages attached. The schedule is as follows: 26th October, 1893, to 26th October, 1894, 10s.; 26th October, 1894, to 26th April, 1895, 12s. 6d.; 26th April, 1895, to 26th October, 1895, 15s.; 26th October, 1895, to 26th July, 1896, 17s. 6d.; 26th July, 1896, to 26th October, 1896, £1. That girl is bound, but it is rarely that you get them bound.

18. You gave us to understand that a very considerable number of them were dropped after the first year?—It is difficult to find that out. I know that it is the received opinion that this is so. I have asked, and tried to find out, and I think it is not so if the girls are worth having. I think it will be found that the girls are very strongly against being bound. Girls employed in dressmaking are of rather a different class to other girls employed in factories—their parents are often well-to-do, and have three or four girls at home they do not know what to do with, and the girls do not know what to do with themselves. The mother goes to the dressmaker—and many mothers are very particular which houses they put their girls into—and they interest the dressmaker or head of the establishment to take the girls, in order to get them out of the way. If they are to be apprenticed between the ages of fourteen and eighteen I do not think you will get them to bind themselves, and the dressmakers do not want to have them bound. One difficulty with these girls is the want of a continuation school. To keep these girls at home from fourteen to eighteen, idling their time away, ruins the girls' lives.

19. How many years will it take to teach a girl dressmaking?—They never learn it thoroughly. They can pick it up if they use their brains. The dressmaker does not think it her duty to teach the girls the trade.

20. Then they are not taken on to learn a trade, but simply to get a certain amount of work out of them?—Yes.

21. You say they are not taught a trade, but they can learn it?—They can. In a private dressmaker's, where there are fewer girls, and a girl is intelligent, she is taught more thoroughly than in the larger shops. A girl can learn if she chooses, but there is no system about it.

22. Will you give us your opinion as to how long it would take to teach girls the dressmaking trade, if they were taught the trade as boys are taught printing, or any other trade?—Certainly, in three years.

23. Then it would not be necessary to bind them for more than three years?—No.

24. The general conduct and character of the girls employed at dressmaking is good?—I should say so, because those in charge of the rooms are always superior women, and it entirely depends upon the head of the room as to the character and conversation of the girls. I would like to add to my remark as to learning dressmaking in three years; it must be remembered that there

are constantly new fashions, and new things for girls to learn in this trade. My remarks as to the dressmakers apply also to the tailoresses, and more especially to the union girls.

25. Your opinion then is that, as a rule, the women-workers are not trained systematically?—No. I think there is great need for technical teaching, and for continuation schools, where they can learn a little more between the time they leave the primary school and go to a trade. They have not enough wide knowledge before they go to a trade. Boys have night-schools to go to, but parents do not care about girls going to these schools.

26. A previous witness stated that, in his opinion, the majority of the women-workers do not earn as much as 17s. or 18s.?—No, certainly they do not; 13s. to 15s. would be nearer.

27. If I said that in my opinion it costs a girl 17s. to 18s. a week to live; that is, supporting herself and clothing herself, would you think it exaggerated?—Not at all, if she is living alone. But girls generally live with their parents, and if they earn 15s. they give 10s. to their parents, and like to keep the other 5s. as pocket-money.

28. They live largely then with their relations and parents?—Yes. I asked one head of a shirt-making factory if she paid any girl sufficient to live on without the aid of her parents, and she replied, "Oh, no!"

29. Then the fact is that the greater part of the female labour of New Zealand is not based on the living wage?—Certainly not.

30. It is then cheap labour?—Undoubtedly.

31. Then factories are carried on on a system of cheap labour?—Certainly.

32. It might be called sweating?—To a certain extent; but the sanitary conditions are good, and the girls are willing to take the low wages.

33. Is there much sub-contracting—that is, letting out by large people to small people, who in turn employ women-workers?—Yes, especially in Auckland, and also here (Wellington). The larger firms take the work, gives it on to a man, and this man lets it out to women. Two or three women get together—two generally—and work. Then, there is a class of unskilled labour engaged in making up shirts and bags for frozen meat. Women get 15s. per thousand here for making these, and 2s. 2d. per gross for coarser sacks. I asked the head woman how many she herself could make in a day of these coarser ones, and she said three gross, which comes to 6s. 6d., and from this 10d. has to be deducted for thread, and by working from eight in the morning till ten or eleven at night. At Wanganui they give £1 per thousand for the bags, but the secretary told me they were pestered every day by women offering to do it for less.

34. That, I presume, is where their time is interrupted, and by home women. They do not have to depend upon their earnings for a living?—Probably not.

35. There is a schedule of wages attached to the Bill, which you have, no doubt, seen?—Yes; and that schedule of wages will reduce the wages of girls everywhere.

36. But it is the minimum?—Yes; but if there is a minimum fixed they get it.

37. You think, then, it is fixed too low?—Yes; 14 per cent. will give a girl under 3s. a week for the first year.

38. Have you not, in striking 15s. as the average, included the youngsters?—No; simply adults; 15s. a week is the average wage.

39. Suppose the Chief of the Labour Department were to say that he had drawn up that schedule on information received, as about the average that he had found paid in the country, would you say that, as far as women are concerned, he had gone too low?—The evil is that, if the schedule goes as it is, it will lower women's wages all through. I have had this from two large employers.

40. It is stated that the large factories are, as a rule, the best conducted, and the most liberal. Does your experience bear out that?—Oh, I think so; almost undoubtedly. I am speaking of the sanitary conditions, not the pay. I think some of the very large factories give very low pay, but the conditions are better, and there are some very beautiful factories in Auckland.

41. As regards low pay and the tendency to sweating, do you find the conditions about the same in the various towns you have visited?—In the country districts the pay is very low; but the girls live at home, and the employers know the families, and if any injustice were done to the girls they would soon let it be known in the little townships; but the pay is miserable.

42. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Speaking of the schedule. If I recollect, the schedule is based on a six years' apprenticeship?—Yes.

43. I think you said that a girl might learn the dressmaking in three years?—Yes.

44. That would mean that an alteration in the schedule to that effect would increase the wages?—Yes.

45. I think you said, Mrs. Neill, that girls are not now, as a rule, taught their trade—that they generally leave before completing their trade. At whose instance does that most frequently arise, the employers or the girls?—If the employer has taught her anything, she naturally wants her to stay; but the girls seem rather restless. One employer told me of a girl who left rather than agree to put her hair up, in place of leaving it down.

46. If the girls are not taught their trade, where do the factories get their supply of fore-women from?—A few may keep on, but you know there is no very large supply required. Sometimes you get a girl who has not married early in life, and, perhaps, married women whom trouble has caused to go back to the factory, and there she becomes a fore-woman. In any case, if they stick to work they must learn it in time, for it is all work that any intelligent woman could do if she had any experience of it.

47. You mentioned the price for making bags for freezing companies. It has come within my own knowledge that offers have been made of bags made in England at even a lower rate than is paid now. I suppose these women would go out of employment altogether if these imported bags were accepted?—That depends a good deal on the company itself. I think 15s. a thousand is very little for them.

48. *Dr. Newman.*] How much a day can a woman earn at £1 per thousand?—I do not know. The woman I asked only told me about the coarser bags.

49. Do you find that if you make suggestions to the factories they are accepted?—Yes, in the large majority, if you can show that it is necessary or good for the girls' health. As a rule they will meet you halfway and do what they can.

50. Do any number resent your going into the factories?—Only a few, and these are not the best-conditioned or large factories.

51. Those who have something to hide?—I suppose so.

52. How long do you think the apprenticeship should be in the dressmaking?—I think three years is quite enough, and should be the outside limit.

53. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] Have you any suggestions to make as to improvements in the Bill, outside of these two things—apprenticeship and schedule of wages?—I do not quite know how you will distinguish between handicraft and skilled labour. Take bag-making. Any girl can run a machine; and they all get 10s. a week. It is simply unskilled work. There is one factory in Wellington which employs nine or ten girls at this work, all getting 10s. a week.

54. *Mr. Buchanan.*] What are the hours?—Eight hours.

55. *Mr. Kelly.*] You could not inform the Committee as to whether it is a fact that a large number of girls are discharged after the first year?—I cannot say. I know it is the received opinion, but I cannot trace it down, though I have made careful inquiries.

56. What has been stated has come within my own knowledge—as bad, if not worse, than what Mrs. Neill stated. As to dressmakers, if they have not actually dismissed the girls they have adopted a system of giving them holidays, and then devising excuses for not wanting them back.

Mrs. Neill: I am only speaking as I find it New Zealand. I have seen the conditions so much blacker in other places. It is so utterly different here from the places where there is no Factory Act.

57. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] Is it your opinion that the Factory Act has had a marked and beneficial effect?—Undoubtedly it has.

58. *Mr. Buchanan.*] To what countries do you particularly refer, Mrs. Neill?—Queensland I know best; but I also know New South Wales, and London before the Factory Act came into existence. There is no Factory Act in Queensland. I was a member of a Royal Commission in, I think, 1891, and a terrible state of things was discovered. A girl could work till midnight, and no one thought it wrong. They had no protection whatever.

59. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] About what time would a girl take learning to be a tailoress? Three years?—That depends on the branch that is taken up. An employer told me that he considered that a girl could learn the different branches in three years.

60. If we fix the schedule to provide three years' apprenticeship, it would be sufficient?—I think it would be quite long enough.

61. *Mr. Kelly.*] Do I understand you to say that a girl can learn the "bespoke" trade in three years?—No; I referred to the slop trade.

62. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] How about women in boot factories? What is their condition? Good?—It is less favourable and worse. It is rougher, and I have, personally, an objection to see girls and men working in the same room. A few factories separate them, and have women foremen for the women, and a man for the men, but others have one foreman for both. There is not the slightest need to have them working in the same room—it is not good for the girls, as some of the men are very rough. They should be separated.

63. *Mr. Pinkerton.*] You have not met many factories where they work together—only in one branch?—Yes, the clickers.

64. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] What are called "house apprentices" are rare, I think?—I have not come across any yet.

65. Do you think a month of probation is insufficient time before a youngster must be apprenticed?—Some people say there should be a longer time, but if you had three months you would have a constant succession of probationers.

WEDNESDAY, 12TH SEPTEMBER, 1894.

H. C. JONES examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] You have come to give evidence in regard to the Master and Apprentice Bill. Will you tell us your name, occupation, and particulars as to the body you represent?—I am a printer, and the secretary of the Federated Trades Union Council of Wellington.

2. You might tell us what opinion you have formed of the desirableness or otherwise of this Bill; or any suggested alterations which you think ought to be made in its provisions?—I may say that our Council has been very anxious for some time past to have such a Bill introduced. The Minister of Labour, eighteen months ago, was approached with reference to the introduction of a Bill of this description. At that time a private Bill was printed and circulated throughout the colony. In some quarters, however, this measure was considered to be rather drastic, and the Minister of Labour promised to bring down a measure which would suit all parties. This was not done in time for the annual conference of the Trades Council; but we went through our own Bill and sent it to the Minister, who promised if he saw any clauses which suited him he would adopt them and use them in his Bill. Since then he has brought down a Bill which I think is a step in the right direction. I do not propose to give evidence in regard to how the various trades are affected by boy labour, as it is our intention to ask you to hear one of each of the unions affiliated to our Council. We will ask you to hear the president or secretary of each of these unions. This boy labour is the biggest evil we have to contend with, and one which we cannot overcome by means of unions. It

will be necessary to legislate in the matter. The boy evil is more apparent in the matter of competition, employers of men being quite unable to compete with employers of boys. I know of two firms in this town. In one place men were employed; in the other boys were employed. A large tender was opened, with the result that the establishment which employed boys got the contract. Later on, when another contract was at stake, the firm which had employed men discharged them and took on boys, so that it might compete for it. This Bill will not do away with that evil as an employer may bind as many boys as he likes under it. We would like to see a Bill regulating the number of boys to the number of men. With regard to the boys learning their trade—speaking of my trade—the boys in a large number of cases do not learn it; I refer particularly to country offices. Very often the boys serve one time here and another time there, and they never properly learn. Boys frequently pass through numbers of offices as learners. I have known cases where boys have passed through several offices in this way. One case in particular I know of where a boy had passed through seven offices, and then applied for admission to the Typographical Society, and of course we had to admit him. We want a Bill to make employers bind their boys, and teach them their trade as they should be taught. I would like to say a word or two on the Bill itself. I should like to see a clause inserted—

3. An additional clause?—Yes; an additional clause, that an employer should not bind as many boys as he chooses, for this reason: I think some jurisdiction should be placed in the hands of the Inspector. Take a country office, for instance. If a man binds seven or eight boys, will he have the least chance of teaching them their trade? I think not, and I think this should be stopped. I think the best thing is to place the matter in the hands of the Inspector, and let him have some jurisdiction as to the number of boys who shall be bound in each factory. The factory employer may bind any number of boys, without caring whether or not they learn their trade; he may do so knowing that in twelve months' time he will cease to exist, and the boys will be thrown upon the market. Of course, they would be entitled to get certificates; but the chances are they will not get a billet again, and they may have to seek some other particular trade, and their time would thus be absolutely thrown away. I think, under the circumstances, that the Inspector should have certain control in regard to apprenticing a number of boys. In clause 16 of this Bill I find that the non-handicraft apprentice is provided for as far as holidays are concerned, whereas the handicraft apprentice, I presume, is provided for in the Factories Act only up to the age of eighteen. A boy going to the printing at the age of fourteen would leave at the age of twenty, because we recognise six years as the time of apprenticeship. The result would be that he would be deprived for two years of holiday payments.

4. You think the apprentice should be paid for holidays?—Yes; that is the position taken up by us. Clauses 17 and 19 do not seem to dovetail into one another. Clause 17 says, "From and after the commencement of this Act no young person shall be employed in any registered factory at any handicraft unless such young person be duly apprenticed to such employer by deed of apprenticeship under this Act, and every such deed shall be read and construed subject to the provisions of 'The Factories Act, 1891,' in so far as the same are applicable." If you refer to clause 19 you will find, "Every young person employed at any handicraft, whether apprenticed or not, shall on ceasing to be so employed be entitled to receive from his employer a certificate under his hand, setting forth the period of such young person's service at such handicraft, and every employer who without good cause refuses, neglects, or delays to give such certificate shall be liable for each such offence to a penalty not exceeding £5." One says he shall be bound, and the other says he shall receive a certificate after employment in each handicraft, which to my mind, infers that he need not be bound, unless the Bill only provides for boys employed in factories. As far as I can see of the third schedule, I think that it is unfair to the employers, as it fixes the rate of wages too high. I think the third year should be reduced 5 per cent., the fourth 10 per cent., the fifth 10 per cent., and the sixth 15 per cent.

5. You do not think the wages too high in the first and second year?—No, I do not think the wages are too high in the first and second year. I think, in the table issued by the Council the scale of wages is very much better, although, in some cases, the rate is too high; I consider 25s. to 30s. at the end of an apprenticeship enough. But, of course, this does not apply to the whole colony, only to Wellington. Our table, which fixes a proportion of boys to journeymen as well as the rate of wages to be paid to apprentices, was brought before the Trades Council Conference, but it was thought advisable not to touch it. It might have been right as far as Wellington was concerned, but in other parts of the colony entirely wrong, so it was decided to leave it to the Minister to see what he could do in the matter. I do not think I have got much more to say, only that the president and I have come here to-day particularly to urge upon the Government to bring forward this Bill and pass it next session.

6. Oh, you want it dealt with next session?—Yes. I now speak on behalf of the Trades Councils of the colony, as our Council is acting as the Executive. We have had letters from every one of the Trades Councils asking us to urge the Minister to pass the Bill into law next session, and I hope he will do so. At the next Trades Council conference the whole matter will be gone into, and no doubt then some improvements will be made.

7. You speak of apprentices being bound. Of course you refer to printing particularly. It would be difficult to insert a clause to provide generally what the length of apprenticeship would be, seeing that different trades have different terms of apprenticeship?—Yes; we recognise that, and think it would be better to leave the determination of this point to the Governor in Council.

8. You mention that an additional clause should be added limiting the number of boys to be bound in your trade.—No, I did not say that. I said that in fairness to boys this discretionary power should be left in the hands of the Inspector. An employer binding eight or nine boys might not, after a time, have sufficient work to keep them going, although he would be obliged to keep them. This would be unfair to the boys, and, under these circumstances, I think therefore that

discretionary power should be given in the Bill to enable the Inspector to regulate the employment of boys as far as possible.

9. You say that the Inspector should find out how a man was situated, and thus regulate his power to bind apprentices. What opportunity would an Inspector have of knowing a master's position?—I take it he would make inquiries as to an employer's position in a district.

10. You think it would be quite easy to know if a man was or was not solvent?—I know there is a difficulty, but I think he would be able to gather certain information.

11. Should your trades unions not lay down some rule as to the question of a man being solvent or otherwise?—I do not think that possible, but I think the difficulty could be got over by the Inspector making inquiries. There is another thing: Supposing a man bound eight or nine boys, could he teach them their trade in a country printing-office?

12. Were you an indentured apprentice?—Yes.

13. Was there a clause in your indentures on which the employer, in the event of his failing in business, was obliged to find you a new employer till the end of your apprenticeship, being liable to a penalty if he failed to do so?—I do not remember that. There is nothing in the Bill—no penalty—that will affect him.

ALLAN WARD examined.

14. *The Chairman.*] You have come to give evidence on the Master and Apprentice Bill. Will you give us your name and occupation, and state particulars as to the body you represent?—My name is Allan Ward. I am a tailor by occupation, and president of the Trades Council, and also secretary of the Tailors' Society.

15. You have gone through the Bill?—I have gone through it, and think it very satisfactory. I have no objections or alterations to make in regard to the matter with the exception of limiting the proportion of boys to men, which the Bill does not touch. I wish to say that the workers are unanimous in wanting this Bill, which will give—must give—satisfaction to the fair employer, the parent, and the boys themselves. In some shops there are masters who will do their level best to employ such a large number of boys that it is impossible for them to be taught their trade. One man in Christchurch employs thirteen boys and only one man. There is a very small percentage of boys trained in their trade in establishments of this description. In one shop, in which I worked for two days only, there were seven boys, and I was engaged only because there was a particular job which none of the boys could do. I have met four of these boys since, and not one of them is a competent tradesman. Had they been bound, the master would have been compelled to teach them their trade thoroughly. I know a young man in Wellington who was working for a master, learning his trade, who left this employer when he was fairly proficient in one branch of the trade—trouser making. He has now gone to work for another employer, who pays him 25s. a week. It would be impossible for the employer who gives him this high rate to teach him the other branches of the trade. Whereas, if he had been bound to his first employer, he could not have left him until he had made himself proficient in all branches of the trade. I hold that this sort of thing is not conducive to morality, and, in proof of this, I might state that this same young man is keeping company with a young woman, but he will never be able to marry her unless his condition is improved, which I see no hope of; but in all probability the young woman in some weak moment will yield to his importunities, and end her days in degradation and poverty. In the interests of the boys and the community generally, a Bill of this description should be passed. It seems only to be the unscrupulous masters who want to take advantage of employing an enormous number of boys, who sacrifice these boys' welfare in order to enrich themselves. If boys are not properly bound and taught their trade it is an impossibility for them to demand the standard of wages, and consequently the class of work turned out deteriorates. In the tailoring trade a boy soon gets fairly proficient in making trousers, and when he has become an expert in this branch the master keeps him at that particular class of work in order to extract as much profit as possible out of him, instead of pushing him through the other branches of the trade. There is another shop I worked for in Christchurch where twelve men were employed, but the master gradually discharged the men and increased the number of boys, until he had seven in a separate room under one man, and not one of these were bound; and only kept three or four men to do the best class of work. I maintain that it is impossible for one man to teach such a large number of boys their trade properly. I have since seen three of the boys, and not one of them is a proficient tradesman. So far as I have read the Bill I find it very satisfactory; the only thing is that it does not go far enough, especially in regard to regulating the proportion of boys to men—that is the only suggestion I should like to see embodied in the Bill. Otherwise you have to trust to the trades-unions, who find it an impossibility to regulate this matter.

16. You mentioned the fact that boys should be taught their trade outright, otherwise they would not be able to earn a decent living?—Yes; at present, if a boy, after working a number of years for a master, asks for wages approximating those of a journeyman, the master says he cannot give it to him: he dismisses him, and moves the next boy up a step, and puts on a new beginner. In New Zealand everything seems to be diverging to boy-labour.

17. Do you not find this state of things demoralizing? Does it tend to larrikinism?—That is my experience. Young men, I know, in Wellington cannot earn a decent living at their trade, owing to their incompetency, and can make a better living at "spieling." They have got extravagant tastes, and do not want to go to the country, so they give over work, and live a life of idleness in town. Of course, the question will be asked, If the proportion of boys is limited to the number of men, what are we going to do with the great number who are unable to obtain work at trades? We are always wishing to have a country population: I would suggest that agricultural colleges be started, where the tuition fees would be so small that they would be open to the

great bulk of the community—not like the one down South, which can only be attended by the sons of the wealthier classes—one where the boys would be taught practical farming. Then the boys would be instilled with the idea that farming was a good thing, and would take to it. You want a farm on practical lines—one that would pay its own working-expenses, and would not be a burden on the State. Then you could instruct them into the principles of farming, and wean them from their hankering after a town life. For myself, I would like to make a practical farmer of my boy; but, unfortunately, there are not the facilities for giving him that knowledge. I would not like to set him cow-spanking and drudging sixteen hours out of the twenty-four for a number of years at little or no wages, and then, having gone through all this, that he would be unable to get what we call a fair rate of wages, because it is notorious that farm hands are the most ill-paid in the country. But, as matters are, I shall have to be satisfied, and give him a trade.

18. Even supposing the boys had a little drudging, would it not be better for them than working in town, and turning out half-taught tradesmen?—Yes; but we want something to popularize farming. We have our schools for mechanics, and other places such as technical schools, in the towns, where boys can better themselves at their trades; but we have nowhere where they could acquire a taste for farming; and under the circumstances they do not like to go into the country. But I believe, if a small vegetable-farm were established in connection with our State schools in each centre, where the boys could gain a knowledge and a love of farming, that it would be a great advantage to them, and materially assist in settling the country and making farmers of the rising generation.

FRIDAY, 14TH SEPTEMBER, 1894.

JOHN RUTHERFORD BLAIR examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] Your name is John Rutherford Blair, of the firm of Lyon and Blair, book-sellers, printers, &c.?—Yes. And so far as my establishment is concerned, the provisions of this Bill, as I understand them, will simply close it, so that I do not know where to begin. I could not carry out the law under any circumstances under these provisions.

2. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] I should be glad if Mr. Blair could give a concise statement of the reasons why he could not continue?—It is provided that all the boys shall be apprenticed. I have a room in which seven machines are running, requiring machine-feeders and pressmen. These feeding-boys differentiate to other branches of the trade as they grow older; but if I had to follow the provisions laid down I would have to apprentice these boys, and would be saddled with far too many of these youths. Apart from the consideration of remuneration, which would simply mean a large loss in carrying on, under these provisions a man would ultimately be doing a boy's work, which would be a physical impossibility, because the boys have to be nimble-fingered, handling sheets of paper. That is one objection. Then I have three ruling machines, requiring three feeders and one taker-off. I presume I would be required to apprentice them also. I would be under the same difficulty with regard to the youths employed on ruling-machines as those on printing-machines. These would be in the same position as the other apprentices; after a time they would be grown-up young men, doing boys' work. The training they get while so employed is often the only discipline they get. Some leave to go to bookbinding, some to carpentering or other trades. Then I have two coloured stamping-machines, at which we have been in the habit of employing girls, but we found the work rather too hard for them, and have been endeavouring to substitute boys. We would have to apprentice these, I presume. The whole thing would be absolutely impracticable. I do not object at all to some of the provisions—for instance, the question of age. Even here a social question of great importance is involved. My own opinion is that youths of either sex should remain at school until fourteen years of age; but you have only to take the educational returns to find that a large percentage leave school about the age of twelve, so that between the age of twelve and fourteen years large numbers of children would seem to be idle. My answer is that they should not be allowed.

3. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] You would not abolish the Saturday half-holiday?—My own impression in regard to the Bill is that it will lead to such a state of things that men like myself will be displaced by big corporations. No one will care to continue in business under such conditions as this and other Bills contain, and the trade will pass into the hands of large corporations, who have neither soul nor conscience; that is how it operates under the protective system in America. Of late I have not been taking any apprentices, for the reason that we have been unable to control them; boys seem to think that when they are apprenticed they can do as they like. The only remedy we have, when boys misconduct themselves, is to take them before a Magistrate, and I object to being placed in that position, and now decline to take apprentices at all. I have four different departments in which junior labour of this kind is employed—boys and girls from fourteen upwards—and in all of these departments there would be the absurdities I have endeavoured to show. Outside the ordinary number of apprentices, we have girls and boys in the printing and bookbinding branches; we have three or four apprenticed at the present time. There are others we do not apprentice—we could not do so. As a rule boys are apprenticed; but I have not been referring to that class, but to the machine-feeders, &c., who, under this Bill, would have to be apprenticed.

4. *The Chairman.*] Have you any boys learning printing?—Yes.

5. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] But you say they "differentiate." Where do they go?—Some to carpentering, &c. If a boy is a good one and likely to become a good man, we give him the preference if we have a vacancy; but it is very common to find that after one or two years they do not want to remain. As an illustration, I would mention the son of a gentleman here whom I took for the binding department, in order to endeavour to keep him at home; and now he has insisted on going to sea. What can you do in such a case as that.

Hon. Mr. Reeves : There is a provision in the Act to cancel the indentures.

Witness : I only mention that case to show that boys, under the provisions of this Bill, would be apprenticed before they knew what they would like to be at.

6. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] Supposing the provisions did not apply to such unskilled labour—if we are able to put in a proviso exempting such unskilled labour?—It might be got over in that way. So many boys to be allowed in the trade of compositors, and so many apprentices to the trade of bookbinding—some scale, stating the number of boys. That might be workable; but I do not think it can be done if you are going to adhere to the provisions of this Bill.

The Chairman : Our object in taking this evidence is to see what can be done.

Hon. Mr. Reeves : Under the provisions of this Act you would take apprentices and pass them on through the work from one branch to another till they learn the whole. The Bill does not want you to take the boys to feed machines, and keep them at it for years till they are grown-up men employed in feeding machines. The Bill says that is not to be done.

Witness : Exactly; and that is what would bring my establishment to a standstill altogether, by compelling me to have an inordinate number of apprentices.

7. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] Will you point out the provision in the Bill to which you refer?—I am taking it from the text of the Bill.

8. The Bill says every young person is to be apprenticed within three months, and taught a trade, not kept at one particular branch; but, on the contrary, he is to be thoroughly taught in all its branches, and shifted from one department to another?—Just look how that would work. I have boys feeding machines; after that they would go to another branch, and I would have about thirty-five boys apprenticed, whether I had employment for them or not.

9. On the contrary, they move out in gradation. They do not keep boys for ever?—No; after three months I would be compelled to apprentice. A boy will learn to feed a machine in about six months, and under the provisions of this Act he would claim that he has learned enough of feeding to be moved on. If in his own opinion, or that of the Inspector, &c., he is competent, I would have to move him on further into another department of printing, and I should in the end be jammed with boys of various ages.

10. Of course, if the whole thing is to be worked by boy labour it would be very inconvenient; the supposition is that industries are not to be worked entirely by boy labour?—There is no employer who can work an industry economically on the basis of boy labour. A good many people who have tried the experiment with young apprentices have failed because they could not appreciate the inefficiency of so much boy labour.

11. *The Chairman.*] Can you suggest any amendment with reference to any particular clause?—I do not think I can. I have not had any difficulty with my people in any shape or form; and I do not quite understand what the Bill aims at.

12. I might point out that in some other trades boys are taken on and kept till they are young men, and they have learnt practically nothing. When they are old enough to get men's wages the employer does not agree to it, because he has others ready to take their places; and the first lot is sent out in the street or to another trade. If the boy went into the country he would not get work, and he becomes a loafer or a spieler, and ultimately ends by going to prison. We want to prevent that. Under present circumstances, we are producing that class of people, and we want to alter them.

12A. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] I may say that the main object of the Bill—right or wrong—is that an employer of boys or girls should not reckon so much on the amount of the earnings he can get out of them, but that they should be instructed thoroughly in a trade. The main object in employing juvenile labour should be instruction, and turning out skilled workmen and women?—Of course, I have no sympathy with anything in that direction. I have in my employ sixty-two to seventy people—it varies a little—and have had no complaint. In fact, a number of young people trained by me occupy good positions in other colonies; so that I do not know anything of these particulars or how to deal with them. In my establishment there are a variety of employments, I carry on all the branches connected with printing, lithography, engraving, &c.

12B. You say you are unable to shift your boys from one branch to another?—Yes.

13. They keep gradually going up, as a boy learns his trade?—Yes; but it takes six years to learn a trade under this Bill; you would have the shop overbalanced by being filled with boys in various stages.

14. You have boys constantly going out?—Yes; but under this Act they are to be apprenticed for six years. If I let them go before that, I would have committed a breach of the Act, as they would not have learned their trade.

Hon. Mr. Reeves : They could go by mutual arrangement. If they have to go, the indentures could be cancelled. There is no law on earth to compel a master and apprentice to carry on if they wish to separate.

Witness : I do not wish to bring in anything about other establishments. There are three or four in this town which have become embarrassed during the past year. My own experience is, during the past two years, that the tendency is for my printing business to become less remunerative. This bill is going to impose a further burden on it.

Hon. Mr. Reeves : I have no desire to go into that matter. I have no doubt you are making that statement in perfect good faith.

Witness : I will show you my balance-sheet for the last two years, which shows the position.

Hon. Mr. Reeves : That is a statement which is almost invariably made. I simply tell you the fact. It is made constantly by employers when throwing cold water on the labour legislation. It is made whenever we endeavour to carry any Labour Bills. Gentlemen make it in perfect good faith, appearing to think that some restriction on the employment of labour will operate especially against their establishments. They forget there are other establishments and other businesses, all of which are to be affected too. How often do we see trades which are being ruined by over-

competition and under-cutting, carried on largely by shops run with child-labour. Now, restrictive legislation will stop them, and, therefore, it is fair to the trade all round, and will not embarrass one shop in particular if it is conducted on a sound basis.

Witness : I am afraid there is a good deal of that. I am stating a practical fact, and the result is that a large amount of printing, owing to the prices, is being done by various processes in merchant's own offices. We are daily sending out machines for doing this class of printing. A movement to use type-setting machines is now on foot in this colony, and I may say I have been informed that the *Daily Telegraph*, Sydney, has displaced eighty men, and replaced them by sixteen men and these machines, and the excuse made is this very question of wages.

Hon. Mr. Reeves : That is the competition of machinery with hand labour. That has been a question long before Labour Bills were introduced.

Witness : What has brought on the reduction in Melbourne, which the compositors have to face, to £2 12s. 6d., while we have to pay £3. Is New Zealand not to be affected by these laws?

Hon. Mr. Reeves : This is not an Act to keep up the union rates and compositor's wages in the printing trade. That will be settled by the union and the employers; if wages are to be reduced from £3 to £2 10s., they will be reduced irrespective of this Act.

Witness : I am not desirous of such a result. I am not at all in favour of low wages; when they are high everything else is brisk. I do not wish to be forced into the position of lowering wages.

The Chairman : I think we ought to confine ourselves to the employment question.

Witness : This Bill sets up what is practically an eight hours a day limit, or forty-five hours a week; we work at present forty-eight hours. The machines have to be stopped as a rule twenty or thirty minutes before closing-up time, in order to be cleaned and washed; and the result of this Bill would be, that instead of stopping at five o'clock we would have to stop at 4.30. The men and machines would be standing idle. It does not mean forty-five hours a week, it would really mean forty-three, and that is why I say its operation would inevitably tend to a reduction of wages.

Hon. Mr. Reeves : That is the eight-hours question which is being fought out all over the English world.

Witness : I have no sympathy with the reduction of wages, and am not speaking on the question from that point of view at all. The question for employers is, how are they to exist under these accumulating burdens and restrictions?

Hon. Mr. Reeves : I think you will exist. The fiercest competition has taken place in countries where no State restriction had been ever imposed. Speaking generally, and without referring to any one town, you know that half-a-dozen job offices run by more or less insolvent printers do more to injure trade than all the Acts of Parliament ever passed. I know something of printing. If you wish to revive the trade, restrict the methods which at present play into the hands of little rubbishing shops, where a man in a ramshackle establishment employing boys and girls cuts down wages and produces general destruction, until he goes through the Bankruptcy Court; after which his partner, probably, starts again with the old plant in some town or another.

Witness : The return on the capital employed is not what it ought to be, considering the current rate of interest.

Hon. Mr. Reeves : Of course, that is the result of general causes. We know that in Australia and England they have not made that for the last two years.

15. *The Chairman*.] Can you give us any suggestions connected with the general provisions of the Bill?

Witness : I do not think I can. I really did not know what the position of the Bill was. I did not know that it was in this "fluid" state.

Hon. Mr. Reeves : Possibly—if I may suggest—the Committee is prepared to take any practical suggestions Mr. Blair might give in writing.

Witness : I am sure it wishes to attain better things, and I am in sympathy with it.

The Chairman : Our object in taking evidence is to make the Bill as practicable as possible, in order to produce equal benefits to every one, employers and employés.

Hon. Mr. Reeves : Hear, hear!

The Chairman : You might give some suggestions on these points.

Hon. Mr. Reeves : I should be happy to have them, and would move that they be added to the evidence and printed.

Witness : I shall be most happy to make some suggestions.

The Chairman : We are taking evidence for the purpose of making the Bill as workable as possible. Will you kindly make any suggestions that may, in your opinion, improve the Bill.

ARTHUR SCOULLAR examined.

16. *The Chairman*.] Your name is Arthur Scoullar, of the firm of Scoullar and Chisholm?—Yes.

17. I dare say you have given some consideration to the question of how this Bill could be improved?—I must confess that I came rather to answer any questions you might put to me than to lead you in the matter.

18. But you have formed some idea of the propositions of the Bill?—Yes: I think the Bill, if passed in its present state, will be unworkable. With regard to apprentices, for instance.

19. That is, as it is at present drafted?—Yes; because, in the first place, of the amount of remuneration given to apprentices; that is excessive. My reason for coming to that conclusion is based on a long experience of dealing with apprentices. As you are aware, a boy learning his trade scarcely earns his wages for the first two years. The first year a boy is in a large establishment he is probably employed in cleaning up the shop, running messages, and doing things of that sort, so that really if his wage is at a high figure he is getting more than he is earning; so that I think for

the first and second year a man employs a boy he derives no benefit from him. I think the first two years the benefit is on the boy's side as much as the master's. A man will not take apprentices to learn a trade without deriving some benefit from them. When a man takes an apprentice he educates him so that in after life he may be able to earn his living wherever he goes; and if there is no advantage to the master he will certainly not educate the boy.

20. Do you not think that is an argument rather in favour of apprenticing than otherwise, say, for six years, so that the employer would get a profit, if not in the first two, then in the latter four years? You think the rate of pay is too high altogether?—Yes, for the first two years. While I think a lad for the first two years, while learning a trade, is not of much value to his employer, yet I think he ought to receive a fair wage. For instance, the first year under the Bill is put down at 14 per cent. We are in the habit of paying 12½ per cent. to our boys. The second year is put down as 20 per cent., and we pay 19 per cent., but, of course, we get the benefit of the last three years. We apprentice for only five years, and derive a benefit in the last three. We begin our apprentices at 6s. a week, and give a rise of 3s. annually.

21. Up to the end of the five years?—No. At the fifth year we give 5s. a week of a rise instead of 3s.

22. What do you suggest as to the mode of payment; or do you think payment ought not to be interfered with by the Bill?—I do not think the Bill ought to interfere with payment. No doubt a scale ought to be fixed, but it ought to be more in the master's favour than this Bill provides for, because the master has qualified the lad in teaching him his trade, and if he does not get some equivalent for teaching him he will not do so.

23. Would you reduce the number of boys in proportion to the journeymen?—I think there ought to be a limit in the Bill. In Wellington at the present time we have twelve apprentices in our place, in three different departments; two of these are in the last year of their time. And we employ seventeen men in the same department; and I have taken out their average wage, which is 50s. a week. 8s. and 9s. a day is the standard wage in the cabinet trade, or a little lower than for carpenters; but there is no loss of time such as carpenters are subject to, consequently the advantage—if you take the year through—is in favour of the cabinetmaker.

24. Do you not think the difficulty which exists of finding employment is caused by men drifting into employments where they are not wanted, after they have ceased to be boys?—It seems to me there is a difficulty in finding employment for all the young men growing up in the colonies. You cannot make them all farmers, and I see that there is a difficulty in dealing with them; but I think it is beyond Legislative control.

25. I quite admit that, but we want to check it as far as possible?—I think there should be some limit. In reference to the employment of labour, I may say that I think there is too much competition in trade in the colony, and there seems to be more men engaged in business than there should be, and the consequence is excessive competition, with the result that many have to go to the wall if they are not in a position to place their goods on the market as cheaply as others. It is rather a difficult question to solve.

26. Do you not think that legislation, though it might not stop the evil, might in some way prevent the abuses going on, and that it would be to the benefit of legitimate traders who wish to act honestly and fairly, if the low "cutting" shops could be restricted?—I do not think it would be a disadvantage to the trade if you limited the number of apprentices, if you did not make the number too low.

27. You would have it within reason?—Yes.

28. Have you read the clauses of the Bill?—I have looked through it.

29. Are there any amendments you would suggest?—I think the holidays you are giving are excessive. You have five holidays specified here, and with the half-holiday that lads of a certain age are to receive, that gives three or four weeks in the year when they are not at work, and by this Bill have to be paid.

30. You mean adding Saturday afternoon?—Yes. For instance, they are to be paid for the whole week, and on one day they are, according to the Bill, to work only five hours, so that, taking the five holidays the Bill gives, with the three hours they are to be paid for although not working, you make the master pay a boy for a month he does not work for. As to the hours of labour, when I was in Dunedin the employes had to make up their forty-eight hours a week by working a little longer each day.

31. I think that is done in many cases?—In Wellington it is different; the week's labour is specified to be forty-six hours and a quarter—at least I found it so when I came from Dunedin.

32. I was not aware of that?—It is so. We lose one hour and three-quarters on each man and boy in the week.

33. Have you any other suggestions?—Yes; I think, for instance, you are putting the employers to an unnecessary deal of trouble in connection with the deductions to be made from the boys' wages after the first year, and putting them in the Savings Bank under a penalty.

34. Would you suggest that the boy's wages should be paid to himself, to do what he likes with them?—Yes, I should; because most people, having one or two sons under apprenticeship, require all the money they can get. Take the case of an apprentice who has lost his father, and is living with a widowed mother who wants every penny her son can bring her; and I think, while you wish to protect the boy's interest so that he may have a little money in hand when he finishes his time, you might be inflicting greater hardship in withholding the money in many cases; and also in inflicting a penalty on the master for not carrying out the provisions of the Bill.

35. You think that provision should not be in the Bill at all?—Yes; I think it is likely to do more harm than good. Another thing is that we find we get on better with the boys, and they with us, if there are no indentures. I may state that all the time we have been in business we have had only one boy bound down, and that boy took it into his head that he could do as he liked, and

the consequence was that we had to take him before the Magistrate in Dunedin; and our experience was such with him that we resolved that for the future all the boys should be taken on good behaviour. Of course, we are bound to keep them in employment; but the obligation was just the same on one party as the other. Suppose a lad is removed from one part of the colony to the other, how would the case stand?

36. Subject to indentures, the agreement would be cancelled; the parents would have to make some arrangement. But supposing there was no agreement?—Our experience is that we have had no difficulty with our apprentices. They know, of course, they can leave—and some have left when they thought they could do better, and put us about for the time being. As many have left that way as we have been compelled to put away; and, so far as our experience goes, we find we get on better without them being indentured. I have such a strong opinion on the subject that I would not have a law of indenture at all.

The Chairman: Of course the objection to that is that a number of the boys are not trained tradesmen at all, and are a nuisance to themselves and others; and we wish to do away with that, and have a reasonable arrangement.

Witness: I think that these half-trained tradesmen who are turned out in that way are as much to blame as the masters.

The Chairman: I quite understand that.

Witness: There are some lads who, as you know, cannot take in anything, or are not adapted for a particular business, and it is really only a waste of time their following an occupation of that sort. I fully approve of the three months' probation that the Act allows before binding a boy, because you can see in that time whether a lad has any adaptation for the trade he is put to.

37. *The Chairman.*] Then, you object to indentures altogether?—I object to them altogether from my own experience.

38. *Mr. Millar.*] In the event of this schedule being passed as printed in the Bill, regarding employers, will they insist on having a premium before taking apprentices?—I think so. I think no master will take an apprentice unless he sees some advantage for himself for the trouble he is put to in educating the boy. I think the scale drawn up here, and which is to be paid to boys, is entirely in their favour. In fact, I do not know who drew up the Bill, but it seems to be entirely in the boys' favour.

39. *The Chairman.*] I do not know how the information was got, but I suppose it was from information supplied to the Minister. Do you consider it is fair to draw out a schedule for the Bill?—I think so. Yes, I think an apprentice in the fourth and last years of his [time should receive such a wage as would enable him to live by his trade.

40. You refer to the second-last and last years?—Yes. We give our boys 15s. If a boy is living with his parents it might find him in clothes and food, and he will get £1 in the last year.

41. *Mr. Millar.*] It is about 30 per cent. on the wage you say you are giving your journeymen—15s. and £2 10s.—on the amount in the fourth year?—It is one-third; but you know a master, in teaching a lad a trade, stands almost in the position of a schoolmaster in teaching them to read and write; you cannot expect a master to lose his time in educating lads to gain their living if he is not gaining any advantage from it. You must allow him a certain inducement to cause him to take apprentices. I do not believe in getting boys in to turn them adrift after a year or two unless you have some reason for it. If the lad behaves himself, I think he is entitled to justice from his employer as much as the employer is for taking the lad.

42. Generally speaking, you give 40 per cent. the last year?—That is something like the proportion we give; and my experience in Wellington, with boys who have been trained with us, is that I prefer them to the generality of men I can pick up.

43. *The Chairman.*] You teach them a trade, and you prefer them?—Yes, for workmen.

44. *Mr. Millar.*] Under the proposed schedule it would mean about 80 per cent. increase on the rate you are paying during the last year?—Yes; suppose you take the fifth year at 60 per cent. The fifth year we give about 40 per cent.

45. On the average wage you told us?—Of course, I have told you the average wage a man receives. There are two foremen who get a little more, but, taking them all round, they get about £2 10s.

46. *The Chairman.*] Have you anything further to say?—No.

47. *Mr. Millar.*] Mr. Scoullar says he believes in the number of boys being regulated.—Of course; but while saying that I think you ought to allow a fair margin; say, you allow a boy to every two or three men in every shop.

48. *The Chairman.*] That is a reasonable limit. What would be a fair limit in your own trade—a growing trade in the ordinary way—how many boys would that mean?—I think you should allow about three apprentices to six journeymen. You see, in a colony like this, where the people are settling, they require furniture and household effects, so that there are very many chances for young men who wish to settle down in the country in business.

TUESDAY, 18TH SEPTEMBER, 1894.

DAVID PATRICK FISHER examined.

D. P. Fisher: I am a printer, and President of the Typographical Association.

1. *The Chairman.*] You have come to give evidence in connection with the Master and Apprentice Bill. You have, I suppose, made yourself acquainted with its provisions. Will you kindly state your opinion of it—whether you approve of it generally, or in part, and would you direct our attention to parts you disapprove of, and suggest in what manner you think it could be improved?—I will introduce the subject by referring to the Sweating Commission, of which I was a

member. As you are aware we found on that Commission that child labour and an exceedingly large number of youths and girls were employed in factories, that long hours were indulged in, that small wages, or very low wages, were prevalent, and that there was no such thing as teaching trades. There was nothing like a fixed living-wage in any shape or form. As a result of that Commission we reported that a comprehensive Factory Bill should be brought in.

2. Was that the Commission of 1890?—Yes, Sir. That Bill could only deal with some of the things that we discovered, such as the long hours, child labour, and that sort of thing; but it could not deal with the living-wage, and the teaching of trades. And therefore the Commission recommended to Parliament, besides the Factory Bill, the bringing in of a Master and Apprentice Bill. That subject has never been touched till now, and the Bill has now been brought in with the express intention of, as I understand it, enabling the youth of the country to thoroughly learn his trade and to provide for his earning a sufficient wage during the term of apprenticeship, and also, when he becomes a man, to provide him with a trade at which he can earn a living—in other words, security of employment. That brings me to the Government Bill. I may say that, as far as the two first considerations are concerned, the Bill meets all requirements; the boy is to be taught his trade, and that we shall have something like workmanship. It also fairly provides for the rate of pay he shall receive. The Bill, however, altogether neglects the cardinal point, in my opinion. Instead of being a boon to the youth it will prove the reverse, because it just stops short at the very point where it should go on. It provides for a boy serving an apprenticeship, and provides for the pay he shall receive; but of what use is that if, at the end of his time, the boy is thrown out of work, and is no better off than an unskilled labourer. We may as well look at the thing fairly and clearly. All employers try to make the most out of their employés. Therefore, an employer will not employ a man at £3 per week when he has one of his own bringing up for £2 5s. per week—that is, a youth in his sixth year. Such a youth would be equally as good as a man at £3 per week. How many employers would then employ a man at £3 per week, as against a boy equally as good at £2 5s.? The result generally would be that boys would suffer punishment in learning a trade, seeing that afterwards it becomes no earthly use to him. As each boy comes to his sixth year and drops out, another boy in his fifth year will be ready to take his place, and a new boy will be put on at the first stage of the business. In this way the Bill must have some provision made in it for the boy after he has served his apprenticeship. If not, you will find that as soon as a youth has served his apprenticeship he will have to go. And where is he to go to? I have just returned from Napier and the West Coast, having gone through nearly all the printing offices; and I found at most two journeymen in each office, the rest being boys. I also found that the highest wage on either coast amounted to £2 10s., and that was chiefly for overseers. The wages varied from £1 up to £2 per week; I should strike the average at £1 15s. per week—and married men at that. Well, I was pleased in one sense to find this state of things, because I have heard so much in cities against unionism being the means of crushing trade and industry, and that it really prevented the worker from getting fair employment and fair wages. Never since the colony has been colonised has there been a thought of forming unions in the country districts. I thought I knew every evil in the printing trade, but I found one I did not know existed, and that was this: a boy's labour being used by two distinct employers. Even boy labour is not cheap enough, it seems. One office sets up Parliamentary and telegraphic news, and another paper in another village sets up other news, and they exchange matter. That is really making one boy's labour serve two purposes. These places never had a union or a thought of a union, yet competition is ten times keener there than in any city. I found that wherever a handful of people were gathered together newspapers were started, and, of course, the thing was ridiculous. There was no necessity for more than the half of these papers; and I almost think it would be a good thing if this Bill passed, and it was the means of wiping out half of the country offices. It would be an act of Providence if such a thing happened. One is simply robbing the other of its livelihood. Each country district is competing with the other, just as offices do in the cities. One cuts the other wherever it can.

3. How do you propose to remedy these faults in the Bill? Would you propose any amendments? You have told us the state of trade; and we want you to point out how, in this Bill, this state of things can be altered?—It could be met something after the style in which it was met in the Trades Council's private Bill. Not in those exact words, but in something like it. Masters should only be allowed to employ a just proportion of apprentices to journeymen. That is the only way to make the Apprentice Bill serviceable.

4. The number of apprentices should not be greater than a certain number to the journeymen employed?—Yes; by regulation. It would then be for the Minister to say what that proportion should be.

5. Is there any way to get at it by trade usages?—Unfortunately, there is not unionism in all branches of industry; and, even in those branches of industry in which we have unions, we do not have all the workers in the union. I do not think it is right for Parliament to look to the unions to right this matter. If at any time the Minister wanted information as to what would be a fair proportion, he could consult representative men, or go through the rules of the respective unions, and please himself whether he sticks to those rules or not.

6. You said that a young man who had just got out of his apprenticeship should not be dismissed, or a young man when he had served his apprenticeship turned adrift to find work at a lower rate of wages. How would you remedy that?—The clause I referred to would remedy that. If such a clause is not in the Bill, the employer will run his business as economically as he can, and he will not pay journeymen's wages. I receive £3 per week; a boy in his sixth year receives £2 5s.; and it is not reasonable to expect the employer to employ me at £3 per week when he can so arrange matters as to have a youth who can do the work at £2 5s. He will keep few men at £3, but will always manage to keep youths well advanced in the trade. It is only a matter of business. I have

had charge of boys myself, and I say it is a very simple matter. Take care that the head youth is learning his trade thoroughly. My own opinion is that a youth with ordinary intelligence is a thorough tradesman in three and a half years, and is very properly working for the benefit of his employer afterwards.

7. What would be a fair limit of boys to men in the printing trade?—We lay down one in every office. When a man starts business he is entitled to a boy with himself; then we allow, if he takes on three more journeymen, another boy, and so on. But I am not here to urge our rules.

8. I only want you to give us an indication of what would be a fair proportion in any trade?—I went to some trouble to compile this table for the Trades Council's Bill, and I found that the various trades differ as to the proportion. If, as I suggest, a clause similar to this is put into the Government Bill, the Minister could take this information for granted, or get the information for himself from the unions.

9. Would you suggest that as an addition to the Bill, as a new clause in it; or is there anything in the Bill that amounts to the same?—There is nothing in the Bill that amounts to it in any shape or form.

10. You suggest, then, that a clause similar to that be added to the Bill?—The spirit of the clause I have referred to should be added to the Government Bill. There is no doubt the Government have the very best intentions in bringing in this Bill, but it will do more harm than good if we are left as we are. If a clause similar to this one is not put into the Government Bill, we will be better off as we are. You see, I am not arguing from my own standpoint—from a journeyman's point of view, but from the boys' point of view. If he has no prospect, what is the use of his learning a trade. As a man running a business, you are not likely to employ a man at £3 when a youth at £2 5s. can do the work. It is cruel to take six years of a boy's life in learning a trade if the prospect is want of employment.

11. With that provision you think the Bill a good one?—I think it is a capital one in other respects. I regard this Apprenticeship Bill as next in importance to the Factories Act as far as labour legislation is concerned. If we get as good an Apprenticeship Bill as we have a Factories Act I reckon the workers in factories and workshops will be ever grateful.

WILLIAM MILES, Bootmaker, examined.

William Miles: I am a bootmaker, and am the Secretary of the Bootmakers' Union.

12. *The Chairman*.] I presume you have gone carefully over this Bill, and you are prepared to say something either for it or against it. Any amendments that you can suggest we will gladly hear and take into consideration?—I have gone through the Bill pretty carefully, and I have circulated it amongst the members of the union. It is not appreciated to any great extent, generally for not having the proportion of boys limited to the proportion of journeymen. I believe if a clause to that effect was inserted it would greatly improve the Bill and give general satisfaction. I dare say you are pretty well aware that bootmakers have the name of being always on strike—that, no doubt, is on account chiefly of boy labour. Two out of every three strikes that have occurred have been caused by this. Not many years ago we had a strike in Auckland which cost us between £5,000 and £6,000. The men were all out on strike, and then a few days after they came out the shops were filled with men—perhaps with more men than actually came out on strike. Because of the slackness in the gum trade, boys who had served only two or three years, and had perhaps an idea of how to drive a rivet, but that was all, flocked into the towns and they suited the requirements of employers at that time. I have a letter here from Westport; and the same state of affairs mentioned in it, I understand, exists in Auckland, New Plymouth, Oamaru, Timaru, and other places. This will show how we are troubled with boy labour and can take no action:—

“To the Secretary, Federated Union,

“Westport, 9th June, 1894.

“DEAR SIR,—There is a little matter cropped up here in connection with the boot trade in this district in which your society could materially help us. The facts are as follows: A (shop) boot manufactory has been established here for the last few years, owned by Mr. Pearson Stubbs. He employs about ten boys and girls at a nominal wage of from 4s. to 9s. per week. He has never employed a man in his establishment from the start. His usual style is to take a boy to teach his trade in five years, the wages to be 5s., 7s. 6d., 10s., 12s. 6d., 15s.; but as soon as the boys are out of their second year he puts them on piece-work at their own prices. At these prices a boy working his hardest cannot make 10s. a week. In no case has he ever paid a boy 12s. 6d.”

I have also received another letter on similar lines. What they complain of is that they bought their boots from fair-trade employers, and it was impossible to compete against work done by boys. If something is done in regard to the limiting of the number of boys in the Bill it will have a good effect, and more men will be able to get employment throughout the colony. I believe that of the total number who are engaged in the trade in the colony, more than half are boys.

13. Have you thought out any course that you might suggest by way of alteration to the Bill?—As far as the Bill is concerned, it is good enough, but I would like to see a clause put in limiting the number of boys.

14. You think that that would meet the difficulty?—Yes, according to the trade societies; but, of course, we know that this boy question is a matter that unions have to fight year by year. We have spent a large amount of money over that question that could have been profitably used in other ways—in factories and industries of the colony. Masters say they do not require boys; but I have had my opinion on that altered. I find that boys, after about three years, are enabled to earn treble their wages for their employers.

15. Do you think, in the interests of the boys themselves, there should be some restrictions placed on the number that can be employed?—Undoubtedly so. Because after they get out of their time they are placed on the same footing with men, and have to look for work for a living.

16. The Bill, you think, will work well with such a restriction or condition as you suggest?—Yes; it will regulate the employment of boys. We have fought the employers on this subject year after year with our own money, and cannot do anything. The only hope we have is through legislation.

FRIDAY, 21ST SEPTEMBER, 1894.

CHARLES McKEEGAN examined.

1. *The Chairman*: What are you?—Manager at W. Cable and Co's.

1A. I presume you have gone over this Bill and made yourself acquainted with its provisions?—Yes.

2. Will you kindly state your opinions with regard to it?—I went through it with Mr. Cable some time ago, and we pretty well agreed that the effect of this Bill would be to do away with the apprentices altogether, or else we would have to be paid such a premium to cover ourselves that only the sons of wealthy people would be able to get into the trade. As far as the schedule of wages is concerned, 14 per cent. for the first year, 20 per cent. for the second year, and so on, of the average wages of journeymen, it would increase the pay of the apprentices, so much so that we could not keep them going and pay our way. In some cases it makes a difference of 100 per cent. on what they are being paid at present, especially during the third, fourth, and fifth years. Our apprentices for the first three years are practically non-paying. It takes what they earn for a year to find them in tools and replace the work they destroy. It is only in the last couple of years that we get any profit from them.

3. *Hon. W. P. Reeves*.] Will you give us a description, briefly, of the work the apprentices are put to in their first year?—They generally potter about the machinery, getting acquainted with it, screwing bolts, and chipping castings, &c.; then they may be put on to assist along with turners or fitters, or other tradesmen in the various branches.

4. How, then, during that time, does he destroy property?—It is a hard thing to say, but it is a fact. The average loss and damage is about £1 per day in the shop for the tools destroyed. He will break a tap, or something of that sort, perhaps, worth 15s. It is pretty expensive running in our trade.

5. You think that the average value of the tools destroyed in your establishment would be something like £25 per month?—I suppose it would be something like from £200 to £300 a year.

6. You call it not more than £250, to be exact?—Something like that. That is about what we allow.

7. How much of that would be caused by men, and how much by juniors?—I could not say that for a certainty, but the majority of the damage is done by the juniors.

8. Some of it is done by the men?—Oh, certainly.

9. How many boys have you in your establishment?—I think there are in the whole of the departments about eighteen or twenty, at the different branches of the trade.

10. How many are there in their last two years now?—About eight or nine of them.

11. There would be about ten in their first three years?—About that.

12. A good deal of the work during the first year is not done with tools at all, I think; they are really messengers?—No; they have the run of the machines. They might be put to the lathe.

13. Simple work?—As simple as possible until they get into it.

14. Do you indenture them?—We have, I think, four boys indentured at present. On looking back over our books I found that, during the last sixteen years, we have put through about a hundred apprentices. About fifteen were indentured.

15. You mean you had them there for the full term?—Yes; for the full five years.

16. What would have been the disadvantage of your having these eighty-five boys indentured?—It would be no disadvantage at all. They preferred themselves to come without being indentured. We never force any not to be indentured.

17. Then your real objection is on account of the schedule of wages?—That is one portion of it. Then there is this taking the money off their wages—this 2d. out of every 1s. after the third year, and 1d. out of every 1s. in the second and third years. (Subsection (b), clause 12.)

18. You say that is an objection—in what way?—We do not, in the first place, see any utility in it, for it would be used simply for a jollification after the apprentice's time was served. There is no need for it. It takes some of them all their time to live without taking 1d. off them, trifling as it looks.

19. That is your objection; you think the apprentice could not live if that 1d. out of every 1s. in the second and third years, and 2d. out of the 1s. for the fourth and fifth years, were taken off their wages?—I think nothing of the kind.

20. I understand that is what you said?—I said there are some that it takes all their time to live; and that, in the majority of cases, from what I know of others it would simply mean a spree when their time was up. And, also, it would entail on our pay-sheet a good deal of unnecessary clerical work on our part. We have possibly a hundred hands to pay, with all broken money through it, and the deduction of this 1d. or 2d. will come in very awkwardly. It will entail extra clerical labour on us.

21. It simply has to be paid monthly. It means one-twelfth in the case of the second and third years of the boys, and one-sixth in the fourth and fifth years of the boys, deducted per month?—They will have to be paid every week.

22. You can take it off the last week in the month. However, that is a mere detail?—Then there is section 20. We have had boys who could not possibly learn anything, no matter what they were put to—boys who knew no more after their time was served than when they commenced.

23. That has simply to be shown and the master will receive a complete acquittance?—But the matter rests entirely with the apprentice. Take a case where a boy considers that he has not been properly treated, &c., and does not choose to pass; we cannot force him to pass.

24. You cannot punish the master for not teaching a boy, unless it is shown that it is the master's fault.

25. *The Chairman.*] Have you any further objection to the Bill itself?—These are the principal objections I have got to it.

26. What is your opinion about the Bill generally—is it desirable or not?—Most undesirable, as far as our trade is concerned.

27. It should not be no law at all?—No. We have been working very amicably with our apprentices—we have had only to discharge one during sixteen years. We have had to deal with obstreperous apprentices, and, with this Act in force, we should be in the Magistrate's Court every week.

28. *Hon. W. P. Reeves.*] Do you know the law at present with regard to indentured apprentices?—Not exactly, Sir.

29. I do not think you do; because what you object to is the law of the time with regard to apprentices indentured?—I am speaking of those not indentured. We have found out that the boys not indentured get on equally well—in fact, in some cases, better.

30. *The Chairman.*] What is the usual length of an apprentice's time?—Five years.

31. And you say you have from eighteen to twenty boys steadily going?—Yes.

32. How many continue in the trade?—I think they all continue. Most of our boys go home to the Old Country. We obtain for them a cheap trip, and they find work in England and Scotland, or go to sea.

33. I imagine you speak of engineers?—Engineers, fitters, and turners.

34. Do fitters go to sea?—Yes, and boiler-makers.

35. It is a common practice here to take lads, to keep them until their time is up, and when they should be getting men's wages to turn them adrift, and they seldom get employed at all?—We have little of that in our trade. Many of the men go to sea, or are employed in our works.

36. *Hon. W. P. Reeves.*] I suppose most of your journeymen have been with you for years past?—Practically; they have served their time with us.

37. *Mr. Millar.*] Have you any experience outside of New Zealand?—No, Sir.

38. I suppose you are aware there is some trade objection on the Clyde, and in England, that indentures are pretty nearly compulsory?—No; there is no objection to apprenticing the boys, if we are properly considered in the matter. We have no objection to having the boys bound down.

39. Have you an average of boys of about eighteen or twenty?—About that; I did not count them.

40. During eighteen years you have completed a hundred boys?—Between a hundred and a hundred and fifty. I took it as an average for five years.

41. Taking the present as an average number, that would leave one hundred and fifty boys who have been turned adrift unfinished?—Oh, no. You take five years' apprentices; that is twenty for every five years.

42. I ask you if you are keeping your average number?—We have put through a hundred to a hundred and fifty apprentices during the last eighteen years.

43. The other boys have been turned adrift without completing their time?—No.

44. Eighteen years at twenty would be three hundred?—Divide that by five.

45. That will leave sixty?—They have to serve an apprenticeship of five years. There are twenty coming in every five years.

46. *Mr. Buchanan.*] You said in the first part of your evidence that it was only in the last two or three years that you got any profit out of the boys, on account of the breakage of tools, and that they do much better work in the last than they do in the earlier days of their apprenticeship. If that is so, would it not be against the interests of the trade to send them away unfinished, seeing that the latter part of their years would be the most profitable to the employers?—That is our ambition—to keep our apprentices when they are remunerative to us. During the last two years they are about 100 per cent. better than during the previous time. In trades where there is a speciality boys might be proficient enough before that to be of use.

47. *The Chairman.*] You think it is of benefit to the firm to keep the lads the full time?—Certainly.

48. In that case indenturing would be of benefit?—Yes; there is no objection whatever to indenturing, so long as we are not tied down to too stiff rules and get a consideration.

49. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Has your trade been profitable for several years past? Has it been in a flourishing condition?—The trade itself has been under great depression lately, especially during the last few years, and I may say the profits have been somewhere about $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. during the last three years.

50. From what cause generally have your difficulties arisen. From imported machinery?—I could not say. It is the want of trade all round. It is because there is no inquiry, no machinery being asked for.

51. Is imported machinery to a greater extent taking the place of what you had previously been doing?—Well, the machinery we can manufacture, and which is most used, comes in free, such as dairy and small freezing machinery. They are all imported from England.

52. Will the effect of the Bill be to increase the expense and increase the difficulty of competing with imported machinery?—Yes, it will practically cripple any competition with outside people altogether.

53. *The Chairman.*] In what way?—In having to pay higher wages to the apprentices.

54. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Do you make machinery for freezing companies, dairy factories, soap

works, and other local manufacturers?—Yes, we get our fair share of it when the work has to be done in a limited time, but when it is not confined to time it is mostly sent Home for. It is principally a matter of time if the work is done here.

55. Do these freezing companies and other concerns complain of their difficulty to pay the prices you charge for machinery?—Not exactly; but we have to cut the price so low to get within a reasonable rate of the price of the Home article that there is nothing in it; but if we were to charge anything like the rate of profit which the Home people put on their goods, we should be simply out of it altogether.

56. In other words, this Bill would be the means of reducing your power to compete with imported machinery?—Yes.

57. Are you at present making machinery for any of the Australian Colonies?—We have exported some plant to Australia lately.

58. So that the reply you just now gave would apply to your power to make such machinery as you are now exporting to Australia?—Well, it would increase the cost considerably, and possibly prevent orders from coming.

59. *Mr. Miller.*] You said just now that this schedule of wages would practically prohibit you from competing with imported machinery, and at a previous stage you said it would increase the wages of the boys 100 per cent.?—In some cases.

60. Can you give us some idea of how much (supposing the schedule was adopted) it would increase the wages per week?—I cannot go into that without going into figures.

61. I believe you employ as many boys as any firm in the colony, and I want to know what the increased cost under the schedule would be. Is it a certain amount per week?—It is a percentage.

62. What would it actually cost you in increased wages per week?—It would come to an increase of about 5 per cent. on the amount of work done.

63. Would I be taking a fair average if I put down the weekly wage paid to the boys at £20—an average of twenty boys, at £1 per week?—Yes; we will say that.

64. Then, under this Bill, there would be an increase of £52 per annum?—I intended to say 5 per cent. on the cost of the article.

65. I want to be told what would be the average increase to you under that schedule?—It would come to about from 70 to 80 per cent. on the wages.

66. According to that, the maximum wage you pay any boy in the last year of his time is?—18s. Under this new schedule we would have to pay £1 16s.

67. Under the schedule for the first year what is the increase?—2s. 6d. increase from 6s. It would be 70 per cent. increase right through.

68. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Are any premiums paid by apprentices in any branch of the engineering for the privilege of learning the trade?—Some of our boys pay a premium to learn all the branches of the trade, and they are put through the drawing office and commercial department after they have completed their apprenticeship.

69. Was that with the rate of pay, at some stages of the apprenticeship, 70 per cent. lower than the schedule in the Bill, that you found some apprentices willing to pay a premium?—Some of the apprentices are willing; very few though.

70. Supposing this Bill becomes law, and the schedule of wages in the Bill is made compulsory, do you think that a greater number of apprentices that enter your service will be willing to pay a premium for the privilege?—I do not think so. We might get some to pay a premium; but if we have this Bill we will have to demand a premium to protect ourselves.

71. *The Chairman.*] You mentioned the fact that dairy plant and small engines come in free. Is it the difference in cost of what you are able to produce that causes people to send Home for machinery?—Principally.

72. And if the wages paid are increased, of course that would intensify that?—Yes, it would intensify it.

73. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Is there any difference in the rate of pay, including the apprentices, and that paid by engineering firms in England for work of the same class?—As far as I understand, the wages at Home are about £1 16s. for tradesmen, fitters, and turners, and I think the apprentices start at 3s. a week; so that it is about 45 per cent. in the case of journeymen, and 100 per cent. difference in the case of apprentices.

WEDNESDAY, 26TH SEPTEMBER, 1894.

ALFRED LINDSAY, Boot-manufacturer, examined.

Mr. Lindsay: I have read right through the whole of the Bill, and I may say I do not think it is wanted at all. I think it important, however, that the lads should have an opportunity to learn a trade, and that some protection should be given them after. Of course, I speak with regard to my own trade. I think the restrictions made by trades unions, which prohibit any more than one boy being employed unless three men are employed, quite sufficient.

1. *The Chairman:* Those are the trades union rules?—Yes; but even with those restrictions we turn out more skilled labour than we can employ, even after that limit. The difficulty is, as far as my trade is concerned, the workers will not do boys' work; they take the liberty of choosing, but they will not take the responsibility. With regard to clause 5, the difficulty we have experienced is in apprenticing girls. Some will come on pretty late, and some will get married; and the whole thing will be upset, independent of the other excuses they make when they want to get away. I think the restrictions in the post-office and savings-bank clause, for the employer to collect the money, is a great hardship. There are plenty of boys whom the parents are dependent on, and they would find the deduction of a few shillings a week a hardship to themselves as well as a trouble to their employer.

In regard to clause 10, as to remuneration, I think it is too high, in proportion to the losses we have to bear in teaching young people their trade, and the stuff spoiled.

2. What would you advise, a percentage rate, a weekly wage, or that it be left open?—I do not think it should be a weekly wage, but I think the percentage here too high. I think some scale should be fixed, but not so much as this.

3. What is your opinion about apprentices and indenturing?—I find it more satisfactory for the lads and myself not to apprentice them. I have laid down a certain scale of wages.

4. Do you think a lad should be a certain time at any particular branch of the trade before he could be said to be a journeyman?—Oh yes, I should say so. In clause 18, it is mentioned that any young person, before being bound as apprentice, may be employed at any handicraft on probation for a period not exceeding one month. I think that is too short, I think it should be three months. In clause 20, I think the power of the Inspector would be very arbitrary, and would lead to magnifying evils that would never come to the Court if he had not such a power to come in and cross-question the boys whenever he liked about real or supposed evils.

5. Could you suggest any amendment by which it could be made workable?—I believe in clause 21, by which a boy may appeal against ill-treatment; I think that is quite searching, and would be satisfactory enough.

6. Supposing clause 21 is retained, you think clause 20 should come out?—I think so.

7. Are there any other clauses you take exception to?—No. I have looked over it carefully. I think the Bill would militate against both employers and employés, and if it came into law would be an irksome and chafing one to work under. I think if it became law it would be best to modify it as I have suggested.

8. Can you suggest any general principle for apprenticing boys?—It does not work favourably at present. In the meantime I do not think that we can have less than three men to one boy. The difficulty is to find employment. We have far more applications for boys than we can employ if we were willing.

JOHN PEARCE LUKE examined.

Mr. Luke : My name is John Pearce Luke. I am an engineer. Taking the Bill all round I do not think it is wanted in our line of business, and I think it will act very prejudicially all round. Up to the present time, as far as I know, there have been no serious differences between masters and apprentices. In the Bill you provide that each apprentice shall be thoroughly taught his business. Well, any firm, wishing to do that which is fair and right, would teach the lad his business; but I think it will raise up a lot of difficulties, if a lad fancies he is not being properly taught and calls for inquiry, putting his employer to a lot of inconvenience and bother; whereas, again and again, the apprentice may, through carelessness or wilfulness, give his master cause for complaint, which the master would consider a trivial thing to make the subject of an inquiry. Viewing it in my own way I should not like to go before a Magistrate, after having been insulted as I have been in our shop as much as any man. But during sixteen years we have only dismissed two apprentices. They took themselves away through insulting behaviour and general carelessness, and, though they wished it, we would not take them back. Employers would not care to raise any objections; and yet apprentices might often be very insulting and very nasty, and put the master to a lot of inconvenience. You have got to chastise him by putting him back to other work for a time, or reporting to his parents.

9. *The Chairman.*] What is your opinion about having boys indentured?—I may tell you plainly that we used to bind our boys; but we found that a boy whom we considered likely to be the best-behaved lad, coming from a good family, very often turned out quite otherwise, took the reins into his own hands and disorganized the shop, but being an apprentice we could not clear him out till the last year of his time. Some of them are very indifferent about getting on. It happens at times that a job comes in that you want done quickly, say, mending mill machinery, or repairing a steamboat. If you tell the apprentices that you want them to “pull out,” so as to hurry things, you will perhaps get a mouthful of “cheek.” If you go down the town and put men on, so as to get the thing done quickly, you get insulted by the boys, because they say you will not give them a show. Then a boy very often causes a lot of damage, in this way, in learning the engineering: For instance, a man will make a pattern in a pattern-shop. Then it is put into the casting-shop, and then it is put into certain machines and machined. The apprentice would possibly be put on to that job, in accordance with this Bill, and he would very likely spoil the job at a cost of say, one hundred pounds. Our experience is that by the time an apprentice has gone through his time, what with breakages and one thing or another, the benefit you get from him during his time is nearly lost.

10. Would there be any difference between the work done by the bound apprentice or the lad without an indenture?—No; as a matter of fact you can do nothing. If a lad makes a mistake or does any damage, you have to grin and bear it; you may be annoyed and give him a lecture, but you forget it yourself after a time. The chief inconvenience in this country is the limited quantity of work to be done. The work fluctuates too, and, though there may be only constant work for three months of the year, the employer is paying the apprentice the whole of the time. And then when a job comes in in a hurry, and you want to put better men on, so as to get the work done quickly, the apprentice will object, and say, “Why should not I be put on?” Then the apprentice will go down and make a complaint against his master. We would not make a complaint against the apprentice, as we would consider it most trivial.

11. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] But how does this Bill bring that about?—Well, you make a provision that the apprentice may bring the employer before the Magistrate at any time; so that you may have to appear at the Court at any time, just as the result of a freak of your boys.

12. That cannot be your experience. Is it your experience that you will always be down at

the Court over matters of this sort?—I know what has taken place before, and I know this: you cannot alter the constitution of boys.

13. I do not desire to do so. It is not because a boy grumbles that there is to be a Court case. A Court case is often a very serious thing. By bringing a Court case the loser would have to pay the costs, and that would be a serious matter. You might have one case brought before Mr. Martin, who would not entertain it if it were of a trivial nature. This would act as a deterrent. The Inspector is not likely to be a fool, or to want to persecute you. The Inspector would not stay at one place all day long waiting a chance to find fault with an employer. He would have a lot of work to get through. I do not think there is any need for apprehension.

Witness: You do not think; but I know, from past experience, and if you had to do with lads in our profession you would know it. It is not like printing and tailoring—a repetition class of work—and plastering, bricklaying, or brickmaking, the same. With us we have boiler-making, pattern-making, engineering, blacksmithing, and other branches, and there are always different things cropping up which have to be done. The Inspector would naturally want to find something to do for his money.

Hon. Mr. Reeves: The Inspector would have plenty to do for his money. He would have many duties to perform, and many workshops to supervise. He would not be always watching one shop; and he would not be there every day to inquire into complaints made up by employes. He is not likely to be perpetually bringing owners into Court for the purpose of investigating grievances.

Witness: But I do not see any need for the Bill at all.

Hon. Mr. Reeves: That is a point we can discuss separately. We are not discussing now as to any necessity or otherwise for the Bill. I do not think it likely that under this Bill you will be dragged into Court every day to listen to frivolous complaints made by your apprentices.

Witness: You must pardon me, but I have been mixed up with the business for over sixteen years. Out of all the boys that we indentured, only two failed to complete their time, in consequence of their own carelessness, bad behaviour, and absenting themselves from work. They wanted to come back, but we would not allow that. I would not think it manly of me to make a report against an apprentice. A master must overlook these things, but the apprentice has no compunction about making a complaint against his master. If it is going to be a stand-up fight between man and man, you know what to expect. You can deal with the men.

Hon. Mr. Reeves: I am ready to admit that you must have a great deal of knowledge about these matters, as you have been working at a trade like yours for years. I agree with you that the Inspector should not permit you to be prosecuted unnecessarily, and I do not think it likely. As to whether the apprentices are likely to make unnecessary complaints or not is a matter of opinion.

Witness: Up to the last eighteen months we have always had apprentices, but we found we simply had to cease to indenture them for our own protection. In our class of business they put us to a lot of expense, more than they are worth. This Bill will make them worse if it passes, and turn them into a lot of larrikins, and you will want to have a dose of protection on top of it. We, at present, are employing eighty-five hands, and eighteen of those are boys.

14. *Hon. Mr. Reeves*.] They waste more than you get out of them?—Taking five years, with the uncertainty of work, the apprentices are not any benefit to you. As for ourselves, we shall cease to employ apprentices.

15. Rather a good thing for the men?—I can say the men will benefit considerably by it, and the avenues for boys will be shut up altogether.

16. *The Chairman*.] Do the boys learn one department at a time?—Yes; though you may put a boy, who is to be an engineer, into a shop to get a knowledge of pattern-work. But if you put a piece of machinery valued at £60 or £70 into the hands of an apprentice, and he breaks it, what redress have you? The whole trouble is to get a steady flow of work. If you have a steady flow like they have in the Old Country, and other places, then you can keep things going.

17. *Hon. Mr. Reeves*.] But they have slack periods in the Old Country?—You can put men on three-quarter time or half-time there, but here you must be open from eight till five. In the Old Country the men make a certain class of work, and work on short time if work is slack. I am in favour of legislating for the men, but in the present depressed state of things no good can be done by this Bill. I think it would be a good thing for the Government to postpone it for a year or two.

18. You are aware in many trades in this country boys are taken on for a year or two, and partially taught a trade at a low wage, and then allowed to “rip.” Could not you suggest anything?—I do not think it can be applied to foundry work. I do not know of one apprentice who has been turned out in Wellington who has not been able to command wages when out of his time.

19. Could you suggest a remedy for the present state of things, which undoubtedly obtains, where girls and boys are employed at trades and not properly taught?—If the unionism business could be worked, so many boys and so many men, then the thing could be managed; but you cannot carry it out in a country where the work fluctuates, and you have twenty extra men to-day and none to-morrow.

20. Then the boys could fluctuate with the men. Do you think, instead of indenturing them a fixed number of boys to a fixed number of men would be the better way?—That would be preferable. Then, as to the proposal to give 60 per cent. for the fifth year (we only apprentice for five years), I think it is too high. Why, our boys would be getting £1 15s. a week; and yet they would earn nothing for weeks and weeks. I think the whole trouble lies in the depressed state of trade.

Hon. Mr. Reeves: I think that is generally the trouble.

21. *Mr. Millar*.] You say you do not know any boys in the colony who have not been properly taught. I think you must have been talking from a Wellington point of view. Do you know the firm of Reid and Gray, or Sparrow and Company? I do not think that statement of yours can apply to them?—As far as the Wellington shops are concerned, I think it applies to the Wellington shops. I have seen boys working at our shop that served their time in one of the other Wellington

shops. If a boy gets out of work in Wellington he tries to get on at any of the shops. And I know this : that those we took in were quite as creditable as those we turned out. I believe, in Wellington, masters are more anxious to turn out apprentices well than apprentices themselves are anxious to be turned out well.

22. *The Chairman.*] What would you consider a fair system for the payment of wages?—We have been paying £1 5s. and £1 7s. 6d. for the last part of the time. Speaking independently, and considering the circumstances, I do not think apprentices are worth more than £1 a week in the fifth year. Considering breakages and wastings, I do not think it is worth more. We came to the conclusion last year not to employ so many apprentices, as it did not pay.

23. Do you consider the percentage-rate a good one, or would you suggest any other?—I think it certainly should be left alone. You may see a lad who is poor and deserving, whose parents are not rich, and whom you think should get a little more. Others, again, have rich parents who can afford to pay a premium for their sons to learn, or, at any rate, the son of the rich parent should get less remuneration.

24. Then, you think it ought to be left to private arrangement?—I think it would be better not to dabble with the wages, but to leave the matter to adjust itself. I think if the class of wages got known about, people would pay accordingly, and act fair and square.

25. Would it not be possible to strike an average rate for twelve months, so as to estimate the number of men and boys to be employed?—Well, I do not think so. For instance, we might be lucky enough to get four or five contract jobs one after another; or we might be slack and other firms doing a lot of work. There is no stability about the thing, and no means of gauging the amount of labour required.

26. What is your experience about the boys—do you find that the number of boys glut the trade?—I should say there are too many boys in the trade compared with the men. Five years ago there were not too many; but boys who were apprentices then are now in their fifth year, and others are coming on. I think it would be far better if the Bill could stand over till things improve again. I do not think it is wise to harass the trade any more than it is being harassed. Engineering is not paying. I only know one or two in the colony who have succeeded; the others are hardly making a competency.

27. You have expressed the opinion that the tradesmen are growing in number more than the work obtainable?—This is not due to the apprentices. The apprentices find their way Home, and to foreign countries. Some of ours are now in India, and Canada, and the Old Country, and are doing well. This is due to the fact that if we get an apprentice we make it a rule to do as well as we can with them.

28. Do they leave the colony from inclination, or are they forced out to seek employment elsewhere?—Yes; they like to get to the Home shops to be finished off; and letters we have got from other parts speak very creditably of the New Zealand boys. In the blacksmithing business I do not think for sixteen years we have made more than two blacksmiths. The reason is that the blacksmith apprentice must have a helper. By the time you pay the apprentice, helper, material, and fuel, it does not pay to teach blacksmithing in an engineering shop like our own. In the boiler-shop it is something after that way too. The moulders' apprentices do not bear the proportion of men that would be reasonable, nor yet the blacksmiths. In the engineering the work is so erratic that it does not pay to have a large number of apprentices. The work comes on suddenly for a time, then all of a sudden it slackens, and there is not enough to keep going with. About the savings-bank clause: I think it would be very difficult to get the employer to collect the wages and put them in the bank. I think the Inspector ought to do that. This is a matter between the Government and the boys, and why should the master be brought into it at all.

FRIDAY, 28TH SEPTEMBER, 1894.

ALEXANDER OSBORNE examined.

1. What is your name?—Alexander Osborne.
2. What are you?—A bookbinder.
3. You have gone over the Master and Apprentice Bill?—Yes.
4. And made yourself acquainted with its provisions?—Yes.

5. Kindly give us your opinion about the Bill?—The evidence that has been given by the delegate from the Printer's Society, as to the evils of boy-labour in their trade, makes my task very much lighter in giving my statement, for the evils they complain of are substantially the same as the evils of the bookbinding trade—namely, we have evidence in our possession which goes to prove that employers have in many instances undertaken to teach boys their trade, knowing that it is not possible to fulfil their agreement with them. There are at the present time in Wellington young men who have been indentured, and are now quite incapable of doing journeyman's work, the same employers refusing to employ them on this account. Through no fault of their own, these men are now obliged to compete in the unskilled labour market, whereas they should, had they been taught their trade properly, be in a position to compete with competent journeymen. We are also in possession of facts from the South Island, where boys are in full possession of skilled work, without any indenture, which in fairness to the men should be performed by them. I allude to the paper-ruling, which is essentially skilled work, at which a number of machines are being worked by boys; and the men, who have taught the boys all they know, have been compelled to do labourer's work in order to maintain themselves and those dependent on them. The same applies to bookbinding generally. It has been forced upon us recently that the difficulty of obtaining work by legitimate tradesmen has become greater through this tendency to employ boys to do work which legitimately belongs to skilled tradesmen. Boys are taken on for a term of, say, twelve months, and are taught a smattering of the trade, and, when it is thought they are sufficiently acquainted with the

particular kind of work to enable the employer to fulfil his orders, the journeyman have either to submit to a considerable reduction in wages, or are compelled to leave their work. I would especially respectfully draw the attention of the Committee to this fact: the requirements of the bookbinding trade in this colony and that of older countries are very dissimilar; for whereas in England, for instance, it is largely of an export character, which exposes them to the keenest competition. In this colony, the production is for purely local purposes; there cannot be the same necessity to employ such a large percentage of boys to men. The above remarks are not made in any antagonistic spirit to the boys, for this evil is felt as keenly by them when they arrive at manhood as by the men, for they, as has been pointed out, are totally unfit to compete with skilled workmen. I have been as brief as I possibly could, but the cases quoted are not exaggerated, but unfortunately only too true. I have avoided giving individual instances. There are other reasons which you are aware of.

6. *The Chairman.*] What you complain of chiefly is, that the number of boys employed is in excess of the number regarded as fair by the trade, and that when they arrive at a certain stage there is no work for them, and they have to find something else to do?—Yes. I might assure you that that is one of the reasons why so many men in our trade leave this colony. We have had instances here within the last twelve months, where fully twenty or thirty members of our trade have had to go away to seek work, and, were it not that the trade which properly belongs to them has been handed over to boys, the men would have stayed in the colony. There is no doubt about it.

7. How does this Bill, as at present drafted, suit the requirements of the trade?—I think it is a very good Bill as far as it goes. I think it should go further.

8. In what direction?—In limiting the number of boys to men. That is done in larger cities by the combination of the men themselves, as you are no doubt aware; but they are not able to do that in this colony, owing to the scattered nature of the work. The cities being so far separated there is no such combination here, and there is no possibility of an organization strong enough to resist and regulate the number of boys.

9. In your opinion, it would be very much to the benefit of boys if they were not induced to go into trades in which they cannot earn their living after having served what is called an apprenticeship?—There is no objection to a certain number being taught; but generally the boys are only taught a part of their trade, just a little. The Bill, I take it, aims at the teaching of boys properly, so that they can compete with men when they are out of their apprenticeship. At present a boy is only kept on for the reason that his wages are low, and because he can do a portion of the work. If taught his trade properly he would be in an independent position. In this way he would be able to work alongside men, and do the work that they can do; but, as it is, when he goes out he cannot do that; he does not know enough. It is an injury to the boy just as much as it is to the men.

10. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Am I right in assuming that the reason why what you call the excessive number of boys in the trade are put in by the employers in order that they can get their work more cheaply done?—Yes, Sir.

11. Then, supposing the master-bookbinders find the competition outside so keen that they have no room at all for cutting down profits below the present scale, whatever that may be, how would you propose that they should make a fair living profit if the expenses of production were increased by reducing the number of boys to the proportion which you think would be a reasonable one, to enable the employers to compete here with the book production that comes in from abroad?—The competition in the bookbinding trade is very small in this country; in fact, it is known that the work which is imported is not able to compete with the work done here, or the price—not after paying the freight; because I might point out that the price of products at Home is almost as great as it is here, owing to the combination of workmen necessitating the payment of a fair wage, and the employment of a reasonable number of boys in proportion to the number of men employed. That is the case in London, and I take it that you allude to importations from Great Britain.

12. Am I to understand from you that none of the goods that come in from outside the colony compete with the class of work done in your trade here; that the cheaper production of men working here has shut out the importation of similar products from outside altogether?—I do not say that it has shut them out altogether; but I believe this, that the importation in our line is less than in any other line. I believe it is done owing to the employers here employing so many boys in proportion to the number of men that has enabled them to do it.

13. To bring in the same goods from the outside?—No, to keep down the importation of this class of work.

14. What I have in my mind is this: that if you increase the cost to the employer of competing with outside goods, then they would be less able to compete with the importations from abroad, and therefore the employment to be found would be decreased. Would that not be the inevitable result?—I doubt that. I do not think so; because why do you give protection to industries? Is it not to protect them against the very low prices prevailing on the Continent and in other places? Do you not protect your workmen, or your industries here, so as to enable them to compete with places where they work twelve, fourteen, sixteen, and eighteen hours a day? You do not suppose the colonists here would be able to compete with the people, say, in Germany or France?

15. I do not think you understand me. I am not raising that question. Supposing the employers, with the number of boys that they now employ, make only a living profit, and cannot do with less profit, you must shut them up if they get less profit. How then do you propose to employ fewer boys and enable the manufacturer to continue his work?—I take it that it is very simple. It is in the hands of the employers themselves. They have only to agree to a certain scale of charges, and they would be then enabled to command the trade pretty well. I would point out to you that this question was quite a burning one in London, and the employers in the bookbinding trade there

formed what is called a Chamber of Commerce of the bookbinding section, and these gentlemen agreed to a regular scale of charges right through the trade. That was brought about simply because one employer employed a few boys; and another, to get the better of him, employed a few more boys; and so on, until the position was this: that the man who employed most boys could make the lowest charges. Well, if there was a scale of charges here which the employers agreed upon—and they did try this to a certain extent, I believe—if they were to do that, then I take it the matter would be in their own hands.

16. Supposing the price at which a manufacturer can produce an article by employing a certain number of boys is £1, and that the importer cannot produce that article at less than £1 1s., and is, therefore, shut out of the market; you then change the position, and, by compelling the employer here to employ less boys, the price of producing the article is raised to £1 2s., then the importer would step in and take his trade away from him, because, as I have shown, he is able to produce at £1 1s. How then would you propose to enable the local manufacturer employing local labour to compete with the importer?—Well, I cannot very well answer that question, because the employer at Home might do it at less than £1 1s., and we come back to the question again. This man may work under entirely different conditions.

17. Do you mean the local manufacturer might work under certain conditions, or the importer?—The importer. I take it that below certain conditions men should not be asked to work.

17A. That is the position. If, as you say, the employers at Home choose to work their establishments on these very lines—at very cheap rates—I do not think that we should in any way ask our colonists to work under conditions that these employers at Home insist on their men working?—That is the only reason I can give you, because there is no finality in it. If, as you say, the employers at Home are able to do the work for £1 1s., they can reduce it to any scale they like, and then you, according to the statement you have made, might bring the conditions of these men down. I contend this: that you cannot expect men to work below a certain living wage. I take it there is no remedy for your position. I am not able to put forward one, anyhow.

18. Take the case of a tinsmith who employs skilled labour, and who only employs this skilled labour for a portion of the year. How do you propose that he should take his apprentices under indentures, and pay them all the year round, when he is only able to employ them for a portion of the year?—That is rather an awkward question, but I take it that is a position which very seldom occurs. I believe it is possible to regulate the number of boys that he requires. If he understands his position properly it is easy for him to employ the number of boys that he could keep all the year round and teach them their trade. I take it that employers do not employ boys simply because they may get the men's trade. I take it they will employ men to do that, and still have their staff of boys that they have agreed to teach. An employer should not apprentice indiscriminately a number of boys to do men's work. An employer, in undertaking to teach a boy his trade, should take boys for that purpose, and not have an indiscriminate number of boys to do essentially men's work.

19. The position you take up is this: in the case of a man being overtaken by a rush of work, what would he do?—My answer is that, if he is a fair employer he will employ skilled men to do it. No employer should seek to compete in the market with apprentices. That should be done by skilled workmen.

20. Are there many boys apprenticed in your trade?—In some cases the whole of the skilled work is done by boys in this colony.

21. What do the boys get as a commencement?—The first year sometimes 5s., sometimes 7s., sometimes 10s. The wages vary from 5s., and the maximum is £1. It might in some cases come to £1 5s. when they are men.

22. I do not mean boys; but how many apprentices are employed?—That is entirely a matter for the employer who apprentices a boy. There is no scale. Generally, the first year, 5s.; the second year, 7s. 6d.; the third year, 10s.; the fourth year, 12s. 6d.; fifth year, 15s.

23. *The Chairman.*] About a half-crown rise each year?—Yes; and the last year £1.

24. *Mr. Buchanan.*] What are the journeymen getting?—The journeymen average from £1 10s. to £3 per week, according to skill.

25. The boys, I suppose, generally live with their parents, or they could not live on these wages?—Yes, I dare say they do, or with their guardians.

23. The statement was made by the President of the Trades and Labour Council, before this Committee, that he would not send his boy into the country prospecting and to work sixteen hours a day, and that, therefore, he was obliged to put his boys into a trade in the town. Boys in a country district get varying wages. I have known none of them to get below 5s.; usually it is from 7s. 6d. to 10s. for boys of say fifteen years of age, with their food and lodging, but not including washing. Would you consider the boy apprenticed to a town trade such as yours, or the country boy paid as I have stated, to be the better off?—Well, there cannot be any question about who is better off. The boy that is found in food and lodging in the country is undoubtedly better off than the boy in the town. The only thing that prevents boys going into the country is that they have to leave their homes, in some cases; not for any particular liking they have for home, or any desire to stay, but because their parents desire them to stay at home to learn some skilled trade—something to keep them in the family circle; they have often to stay at home against their wish. I know a great many cases where parents have had chances of sending their boys into the country, and have refused to do so on that account. I believe the boy working for 5s. a week in the country, with his food found, is better off than the boy working in the town at the present time. That is why we want the Master and Apprentice Bill passed—to make the position of the boy in town more comfortable. There is very little encouragement now for a boy to learn any skilled trade. Boys acquire a certain knowledge of a trade, and then it is of no use to them nor to their employer

by and by. The employer will not pay him more than a boy's wage; consequently, the man's life is spoiled. He finds that he has thrown his time away when he should be getting a wage that would enable him to live as a man should. That is, when he desires to marry and to put himself into a comfortable way of living, as every honest working-man has a right to expect, he is blocked by this question of boys. He sees boys doing work that as a right belongs to him.

27. *Mr. Millar.*] Is it your opinion, Mr. Osborne, that one of the inducements, in addition to the benefit of keeping a boy at home, is that, in sending him to a skilled trade, after he has served his time there is a prospect of his getting a wage which will enable him to live comfortably?—That is one of the inducements that all people think of when they have their boys taught trades.

28. Not that the boy in the country would not get a fair wage, because he is much better off than the boy in town, but the drawback in the country is that after the boy has grown to manhood the wage he earns is not enough to enable him to live in comfort unless he is able to take up land. The average wage of a rouseabout is very low?—I take it that the position is that parents are anxious that their boys should learn a trade that will enable them when they grow up to get their living. I have had a good deal of experience on this subject. We know that men in unskilled trades are paid a very low rate indeed. Through slackness of work I have had to do work in many branches of unskilled labour, and I know that unskilled labour is paid for at a very low rate indeed; and I take it that that is the reason why parents have their boys taught something that will enable them to do skilled work if an opportunity occurs, besides being able to do unskilled work. The country workman is not in such a position as Mr. Buchanan imagines, because, though as a boy he earns 5s., and is doing well, it does not follow that as a man he is going to do so. The wages paid to labourers in the country are very low.

29. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Have you in your mind that the country boy is not also learning a trade in spanking cows? Is it not a fact that the country boy is learning something to enable him to go upon the land later on, after he has accumulated sufficient money from his wages? Is he not learning a trade equally with the boy who enters into indentures to learn a town trade?—I take it that that question is quite beside the business that I came to give evidence on, but I am quite willing to answer it. As the position is now, the country boy is as well off as the boy in town; but, if the conditions of the boy in town were improved, the town boy would have a far greater advantage. That is, if employers were to use legitimate means of producing without so much boy-labour. I believe the condition of the mechanic in town would be then much better than it is.

TUESDAY, 2ND OCTOBER, 1894.

ROBERT HANNAH examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your name?—Robert Hannah.
 2. And your occupation?—Boot importer and manufacturer, carrying on business in Wellington.
 3. You have been called to give your opinion on the Master and Apprentice Bill, which, no doubt, you have given time and consideration to?—As far as I can see there is nothing very objectionable in front of clause 10 of the Bill.

4. What objection do you see to clause 10: "Ratio of wages of handicraft apprentices"?—My objection to the percentage is that it is not in keeping with our trade. In the first place, we start our apprentices at 7s. 6d. According to the percentage you put down here, it would be an Irishman's rise to them: It is a lower scale. As compared with our scale, it is 5s. 7d. against 7s. 6d., 8s. against 10s., 14s. against 12s. 6d., 20s. against 15s., 24s. against 20s. I think our scale on the whole is a fairer scale than the one you have put forward.

5. Then, you think it is too low in the schedule?—It is too low and too high. The jump is too great.

6. What do you think would be the best way of fixing the scale?—I do not think you could improve on the one we are working under now. I think it is a fair one. I have never heard any complaints, and I think it is recognised by the trade as being a fair one.

7. Would you have it fixed in the way you suggest by Act?—I would, decidedly. That is simple and understandable, both by the boys and parents, and not so complicated as this one in the Bill. Of course, any house or firm employing apprentices would really require a clerk to keep a set of books for them; and I do not think the Legislature ever intended to cause such persecution.

8. The reason why we are asking the opinions both of the employers and employed is that we may avoid anything which may ultimately lead to the infliction of a wrong, with the view of, next session, bringing down a Bill which will fairly deal with the question. Our intention now is to get as much information as we can on the subject?—As far as I am concerned I am at a loss to know why the Bill was introduced at all, because the indentures of the trade under which the boys are working now, I think, have worked satisfactorily to both apprentice and master.

9. Now, with regard to clause 11: "Wages of non-handicraft apprentices"?—According to this clause every person must be indentured.

10. Yes, practically, although it is not intended to apply it that way. It is very difficult to say what "handicraft" means?—It means to us that you would have to indenture a packer, a sizer, or any girl or boy who would be able to receive a remunerative wage for twelve months. When they took up any portion of the trade that would be of use it would be right enough to indenture them. That clause alone in any factory of any magnitude would throw out from ten to twelve hands.

11. Then you would suggest that clause 11 be struck out?—I should, of course, speaking impartially on the matter.

12. Clause 12: "How wages to be paid"?—If you take the strict reading of that clause, really no other person than the master can pay them.

13. No doubt he is the person who pays them, but they can be paid by his agent?—There are always people ready to take advantage of omissions. I might be in Dunedin, or absent somewhere else, on pay-day. The intention may be right, but while the thing is there we are under the lash.

14. Subsection (a) and (b): "Savings-bank deposits"?—Of course, that is a most objectionable clause. In the first place, my experience of apprentices that we have had is that their parents, as a rule, as soon as the boys are bound, put in an appearance and obtain goods in place of their wages, and they are always £1 or £2 in our debt. Of course we give them the goods, so far as we are justified, and we stop the amount of one or two shillings a week, by special arrangements with the parents. And at the expiration of the term of apprenticeship what use will this sum be to the apprentice? It might be the means of providing him with his passage-money to some other part.

15. Clause 15: "Master failing to make deposits liable to penalty"?—That is another very objectionable clause. That means, as I stated before, that it will entail the keeping of a special clerk to keep a set of books for our apprentices.

16. So, practically, you object to clauses 12 to 15, inclusive, dealing with the payments and holding back of certain moneys?—Yes.

17. Clause 16: "Hours of labour of non-handicraft apprentice"?—Of course, that is provided for by the Factories Act. The penalty in subsection (3) I consider rather severe.

18. Section 17: "No young person to be employed at handicraft unless duly apprenticed"?—I think that is a very important clause. That, of course, refers to what I objected to in the first instance. We could not, and would not think of indenturing that class of people.

19. You object to indenturing altogether, then?—I do.

20. Subsection (3) of clause 17: "Deed to be executed by employer"?—That follows the other, as a matter of course.

21. Subsection (4) of clause 17: "Previous service and skill may be taken into account"?—Of course that is not admissible in certain trades, and ours in particular. We cannot accept that. The apprentices have to serve five years before they can be admitted to the trade union.

22. And you prefer the present system, as now conducted in the boot trade, to this?—I do.

23. Clause 18: "Probationers in handicraft"?—I suppose that is taken from one of our rules. It is a very fair clause, that the apprentice should have a fair trial.

24. One of the witnesses has suggested that the term should be changed to three months?—One is not long enough; but, of course, that is the contention the men took up, and we did not think it worth our while to object. A month is not sufficient; but at the same time this clause was arranged at a time when the members of our trade on both sides were not so familiar with the requirements of the trade as they are at the present moment.

25. Clause 19: "Apprentice entitled to certificate of service"?—Of course, there is nothing objectionable there.

26. Clause 20: "Examination into tuition of apprentices"?—Now, this is an important one. In the first place, the Inspector, I may state, is universally objected to by the trade. An Inspector must take the power out of the master's hand, and, of course, where an apprentice has the slightest idea that the power is taken away from the master he can make himself very objectionable. I know I would not have an apprentice on my premises on any consideration if there was any third party to interfere outside the parents. There are ample provisions made for such cases in the old Apprentices Act.

27. It is an assumption that the parent or guardians, being reasonable people, would only take advantage of this clause when the boy was neglected, and the employer could take advantage of it when the boy would not do anything?—But the Magistrate has more power than any Inspector is likely to have, and that is provided for in the old Act.

28. Then, you would have the Magistrate alone in this case?—Yes; that is provided for in the old Act. And apart from that, as you will understand, it would be impossible for any clause to be inserted which could comply with the requirements of the various trades. In our trade an Inspector might be well up in one department, but would be no authority in another. Now, we can mention five departments in our trade, and they would, of course, require five experts to be an authority. I say the Inspector there has no power. The Magistrate, parent, or guardian should be provided for. Referring to the Inspector: as you know, as a rule it is always the best man who is put over the apprentices, and you pay him a good salary. In some instances, you have got some very peculiar boys to deal with; and if one of those boys felt disposed, although an Inspector might be standing over him for three days in succession, he could spoil a portion of all the goods put in his hands. Of course, what we have to guard against is giving a boy such power. If we know a boy can do the work, and will not do so, it is our place to use our power to meet the case, but not the Inspector.

29. The clause provides for that: "If the expert's report shows that the apprentice has been properly taught and trained, the applicant for such inquiry shall pay the expenses of such examination." Of course, if a lad wilfully destroys work, there is another law apart from that?—The Inspector is what we distinctly object to. When the boys know that we can take them before the Magistrate if they go away or neglect their work, it has a good effect; but if that power is taken away, and given to an Inspector, I know from my past experience that they will adopt any course to get away if they wish to go, and this would enable them to do so.

30. Clause 21, subsection (2): "Ill-usage of apprentice"?—I had some trouble in previous years with some of my apprentices, and I had a clause inserted in the indentures, and I found it very effective.

31. What was the nature of it?—The nature of it was that if the apprentice misconducts himself in any way we hold the right to cancel his indentures.

32. Would that not cut both ways—would the lad not have similar power?—Certainly; but my experience has been that it has always been one-sided. With regard to the ill-treatment of apprentices, I have travelled over the world, and up to the present time I have never known a boy

to be ill-treated in a workshop. In fact, there are a great many instances where the men put up with more from the boys than they should.

33. Do you not think it is safe and wise to provide against ill-treatment. You might travel for years and years without seeing it, but then a case might arise?—The old Apprentice Act amply provides for that.

34. Clause 22, subsection (1): "Names of probationers or apprentices to be posted in workshop"?—That is provided for in the Factories Act.

35. Subsection (2): "Penalty"?—It is all penalties on the master and nothing on the apprentice. I think they should be equally on both sides if there are to be any penalties at all.

36. You think there should be a penalty provided for wilful disobedience, &c.?—Yes, certainly.

37. But subsection (3) of clause 21 provides for that?—But that would infringe the Truck Act.

38. If this becomes law, apprentice and master would be exempted from the Truck Act so far as the carrying out of this Act is concerned. Clause 24: "Governor may appoint inspectors"?—That is where the delicate point comes in. For instance, in our trade the Inspector would be to all intents and purposes useless unless he was an expert.

39. The Inspector, of course, in any case could not be expected to be an expert, because he would only see that the provisions of the Act were carried out. He would be guided by the parents' or master's report?—We have got the Stipendiary Magistrate now. The case would have to go eventually before him. The Inspector is a third party, and would be most objectionable.

40. This clause deals simply with the appointment of Inspector?—I say the Inspector would be a perfect dummy unless he had some knowledge of the trade. For instance, a boy might complain to him that he was not being taught any portion of the trade. How could that man deal with that? Why should you have such a clause? The best thing to do would be to strike it out.

41. You object to clause 24?—I do.

42. Clause 25 (a): "Define terms of apprenticeship"?—Of course, ours are defined.

43. Subsection (b): "Declare whether any specified trade, &c., is a handicraft"?—I most decidedly object to apprentice any boys to work outside the trade.

44. Subsection (2): "The wages payable to handicraft apprentices shall vary with and according to any such declaration or alteration"?—Well, I should take this to read also as coming under the heading that, in the case of apprentices, the maximum wage might be £2 to-day, £1 10s. the next year, or £2 10s., and the apprentices' wages would vary accordingly.

45. Yes, if they get a percentage rate they must take their chance of a fall as well as a rise in the ordinary wages rate. Clause 29: "'Solitary confinement' struck out of the Act of 1875"?—That is like a good portion of the Bill. It is there, and you do not wish to enforce it.

46. That is doing away with solitary confinement?—It has never done any harm yet. I think it is a very good proviso, nevertheless. A caution sometimes has almost as much effect as real treatment. With regard to the Bill as a whole: as you are aware, our general meeting in Christchurch took place last week, and this Bill came up for examination, and the unanimous opinion expressed was, that if the Bill passed in anything like its present form we should either have no apprentices or should have to insist on a premium.

47. Was that resolution passed by your Council?—By the Boot Manufacturers' Association. You will receive a letter from the Secretary embodying the opinion of the Boot Manufacturers' Association on this subject.

48. Speaking generally of the Bill, do you think it desirable or otherwise?—I think it is most undesirable.

49. But if modified in the way you have suggested?—I do not think you could improve on the present law.

50. You object to the Bill and think it is not required?—I do. We have always bound our apprentices, and have a form of indenture. In former years we had a great deal of trouble with our apprentices. When they had served two or three years they were always running away. Then I had an indenture-form drawn up by a solicitor, and since that has come into force we have had no trouble whatever. But, apart from that, there is not likely to be any trouble so long as the Federated Bootmakers' Union and the Boot Manufacturers' Association work in harmony. I think if all trades were to take up the position that we have done the Conciliation Bill would not be required, nor the Apprentice Bill. I am quite sure of that. Both sides can speak feelingly as to that. Altogether, we are in a position to thresh out all differences in a more effectual way than if any third party came in. It has been better for employer and employed. We have for the past three years had regular work, so far as the trade would justify us, and there has been no friction. We have been settled for twelve months, and can go on for another twelve months without fear of interruption. We are there equally balanced, and if any dispute occurs means are provided to meet it.

51. From what you say, I take it that you suggest that some sort of provision should be made whereby each trade could be brought together on the same lines as the bootmakers?—Yes, that is my opinion. I am speaking from three years' experience, which has proved that our arrangement has worked out to the satisfaction of both sides, and, until you have made some such provision, you never need expect to have peace and harmony. No Government and no legislation will ever be in a position to enforce anything. Of course, you can take a horse to the water but you cannot make him drink.

JOHN KIRKCALDIE examined.

52. *The Chairman.*] I presume you have made yourself well acquainted, Mr. Kirkcaldie, with the Master and Apprentice Bill now before Parliament. In order to get the Bill revised before next Parliament, and, to make as complete a measure of it as possible, we have decided to take evidence from both sides—from employer and employed alike—and to hear objections and suggestions, with

the object of improving it?—I may start off by saying that I have been thirty years in the colony and have never indentured an apprentice.

53. Do you object to the principle of indenturing?—Yes.

54. Can you give reasons for your objection?—Yes. It takes away from the liberty of the individual, either on the one side or the other. I may say that the first cross I have put against the Bill is at clause 10.

55. What is your objection to clause 10?—The fixing of the rate of wages.

56. Have you an objection to the rate of wages being fixed by Act?—Yes. While I have not many apprentices, or those who would come under the designation of apprentices, they will vary as much as they do in other walks of life, and the terms must necessarily be higher and lower according to the grade in the same class of individuals. We cannot all be on the same plane unfortunately. But this clause 10 is the very essence of levelling.

57. It only provides a minimum?—True enough, but that minimum is regulated by Act of Parliament. In still referring to this clause, I think that to those most interested, and that is the apprentices themselves, it will be very injurious. I take it there will be no spirit of emulation if this is put into operation. Take two brothers, learning the same trade in the same place. One is industrious, and does considerably more than the other, but both get the same pay. Might he not say, "Why should I do so much more than my brother? He get just as much as I do." I think it will retard any spirit of emulation. In a similar way the master may say, "I am not going to pay him more than to the brother, although he does more work." I think there is no necessity for dealing with such a question as this.

58. You think the whole question would be better left to private arrangement?—To be left as between the master and apprentice. The 11th clause then deals with the increase of wages. There, again, I think it would operate in many cases unfairly.

59. In the same way as the two brothers you quote?—There are apprentices who get their increases more frequently than those mentioned in this clause, and there are other apprentices whose wages it would be a tax on the employer to increase in the manner set out in this Bill. With regard to clause 12, I certainly take exception to subsection (b). All through my history the question of eight hours per day has never been my limit of work, and even our half-holiday now has very seldom affected myself. The reason I brought up the question of eight hours a day is because you are going to tax me again with overtime, for by keeping a book I suppose you mean taking money to the bank and depositing it in so many different names. I think that is a severe tax, and a tax which ought to be put on no master whatever. By clause 15, if I fail to perform that duty for seven days I am liable to a penalty of 10s. Illness or absence might intervene, but there is nothing to protect the master from those circumstances. In clause 16, subsection (3), there is a penalty attached to a master offending against any of the provisions of that section of £10. It seems to me that the masters must be regarded as something worse than inhuman. In clause 17, subsection (2), a master, if he has any one who will come under the heading of apprentice, will be liable to a penalty of not exceeding 20s. for every day, after three months has expired, if the male or female is employed and not apprenticed. Under subsection (3) of the same clause, I take it that any one who has been with me for a shorter or longer period may be withdrawn at the instance of the parties therein mentioned.

60. No, it is the opposite to that?—I take it that he can take him or her away from me to bind him or her to another person. If that is the right interpretation, then subsection (2) of clause 17 would seem to me to be unworkable, because I would say, "Very well, take them away." Clause 20, I think, is most abhorrent to any honourable master's feelings. It is simply enough to make any one say he would have no apprentices whatever. I have been in communication with a large employer who, I understand, has not been subpoenaed to attend here, in Dunedin, and he tells me—he is the head of one of the largest firms in Dunedin—that he and another large firm have resolved, if this Bill becomes law, to insist upon the apprentices being removed, and, if they cannot do that, then all the apprentices coming afterwards will be subject to a premium before being received into the business; so that I contend, from that, that this Bill is going to very seriously hamper the rising generation, and also to kill the very industries the Government have been anxious to foster. I quite entertain this view, that if I am to have apprentices they will have to bring a premium with them.

61. You object altogether to the provisions of clause 20?—Yes. Clause 21 refers to grievances. The grievance may arise on the apprentice's side. It may be just or unjust, and one can always make out a very good case if he has a good advocate. That cuts both ways. An apprentice can get up a grievance, and make a very good case out, and we should be subject to penalties. I see it is £5 by the next clause. The master may have a grievance against the boy or girl, as the case may be, but with the stronger evidence they could bring he gets the worst of it. Under such conditions, what harmony could exist between master and apprentice if they are holding each other at arm's length. If there is a grievance, and it is taken before a Magistrate, what harmony can exist between the master and apprentice? I contend that it is these Bills which are causing a line of demarcation to be raised between the master and the employed which did not exist before they were brought into operation. This Bill is one of them; and then there is the Factories Bill, and the Shop and Shop-assistants Bill.

62. Do you not think the Factories Bill a good one?—No.

63. Are you aware of the condition of things before Mr. Bradshaw's Bill was introduced?—He told me who the delinquents were at that time.

64. Girls were working up to 10 and 12 o'clock, and into Sunday morning?—Yes.

65. Do you not think that a Bill which has altered that has done some good?—Yes; but if there is a little disease in the body it does not follow that you should kill the body in order to get at the disease.

66. But you should give the body strong medicines?—But you have been giving them to bodies which did not require them. Clause 22, subsection (2), is another instance of the strong dealing with a master. I must say that, as far as I know, not a single complaint has been made of my treatment of my hands. Clause 25, subsection (c): “Declare average wages.” If you turn now to the third schedule, you will see there that the first year’s pay is 14 per cent. on the minimum rate of wages to each handicraft apprentice, in ratio to the average wages of journeymen or adult wage-earners. I meant to ask the heads of my workrooms how they treat their beginners, but I have forgotten it. I rather think that in the dressmaking and millinery they give twelve months without payment; so now you are imposing a tax of 14 per cent. on the adult wage-earners to give these apprentices, and it is only reasonable to say that any one beginning must necessarily detract from the earning power of those who are able to fulfil their duties, because they have got to teach those who have just appeared upon the scene. So that we would get less labour and have to pay a higher rate for it.

67. You think the percentage rate too high?—It is not the custom.

68. But the custom may be a bad one?—I do not know that it is. The young people are always anxious enough to learn a business, and if you introduce these proposals we shall have to insist on a premium. With regard to the other conditions—two to six years—I suppose the Governor has a right to determine when the apprentice shall cease?

69. Our object in taking evidence is to make the Bill next session a good workable measure?—This rate of wages I would ignore, if the apprentice showed greater ability than those about him or her; but if you force me to pay a fixed rate, I should simply take it and abide by it.

70. Then, instead of it being a fixed rate, you would prefer it to be left to the parties concerned?—Yes.

71. What is your general opinion of the Bill? do you think it calculated to do good or ill?—To my staff I think it perfectly unnecessary. When I showed my dressmaker this Bill, and told her what would happen—that we would have to pay the apprentices—she promptly, and without premeditation, said: “Then we will not have apprentices.”

72. Then, your opinion is that the Bill is not required?—That is my opinion.

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX A.

DEAR SIR,—

Auckland, 16th August, 1894.

We take the liberty of writing you *re* proposed Master and Apprentice Act.

We have read same, and though at first it seemed to us very stringent, and, in fact, unnecessarily so, on second consideration, viewing the many trades and the condition of boys in same, we think that, owing to measures adopted by some employers, it may be required, and do not think that your colleague, the Hon. Mr. Reeves, would introduce same without good reasons. At the same time, it is unfair to class all trades alike, conditions being different, and it will press unduly heavily on employers whose aim is to be just, and on some industries.

It is not our intention, as we are not and have never been members of any association, to take any steps other than this letter.

We would point out that our industry differs from the majority, as it requires years for an apprentice to gain the requisite practical and technical knowledge required; and when the time is served, he is only then really beginning to understand the trade. The first year a boy is really a loss to us; and the second, very little use financially, considering waste of material, loss of time, &c. In our case we have no foreman, but control our various branches ourselves, and each branch is graded according to the value of the work. Our journeymen, therefore, earn various wages accordingly.

We have never had a strike among our hands, and pay fair wages, in the proportion that the various varieties will afford. Competition is very keen, and it is only by judicious working of a limited number of young men with the journeymen that the business can be made to pay.

For many years we have had to contend with foreign markets and local prejudice. With the help of machinery and the tariff we are almost enabled to keep the imported out of the market. In Auckland we are not aware of one carriage-builder who has retired on money made in the business, but we know of many who have failed—two during the last six months. It is very essential that our young men should have a technical knowledge, and we have made attempts to teach them after working-hours, but they will not take the trouble.

We do the largest carriage-building business in the colony, and build the greatest variety of vehicles, and, in consequence, have inquiries for openings from improvers from all parts of the colony; in some cases, offers to work for a time at apprentice wages for the experience. If the Bill passes in its present form we shall have to give up the export trade to the Islands. Every trip of the steamer we send two or three vehicles, and sometimes double. The profit on the drays is from 5s. to 10s. a dray only. This trade consists of hand-carts, spring-carts, buggies, and drays.

We have no indentured apprentices, and have had none, with one exception, for fourteen years. This exception was a failure, cancelled within twelve months. Our experience of thirty years is that they are a failure. We treat ours from a moral stand-point, and find it is the best without exception. We do not turn away our young men as soon as they have completed the required number of years, but keep them on, as circumstances will permit. Some have been with us seventeen years, and some of our employes twenty-nine years. Our young men know full well they are on their own bottom, and learn accordingly; not so with the indentured. Some of the

best journeymen in the colony to-day served their time with us in their respective branches, but were not indentured. The main features of the Act which are most oppressive to us are: Compulsory indentures; rate of wages; savings-bank deposits; persons now employed to be indentured within three months; and examinations.

We have given you our reasons *re* the compulsory indentures.

Rates of Wages.—This is not at all in reason, and we believe every coachbuilder will uphold us in this. We have to instruct the apprentice in the practical; teach him all the technical he requires, and, at the same time, instead of receiving any benefit from his labour in his earlier years, suffer the waste of material in some cases, tools as well. For what? the privilege of teaching him the trade, that he may earn a livelihood during life. Will the Government compensate us, or keep us, if this results in financial failure, as the country benefits? The blacksmithing department would be most serious: In addition to the apprentice's wages, there is blast for fire, coal, waste, iron, and strikers' wages to be paid for by the employer.

Savings-bank Deposits.—This a laudable suggestion, but think it hardly the duty of the employer; either parent or Inspector.

Persons now Employed, &c.—Three months is too short to effect alterations as required under this clause.

Examinations.—This is very unjust, not that we fear examinations; but a master may do all he can and the apprentice not progress, through the fault of apprentice in many ways.

In conclusion, we would ask you to give this aspect of the question your thoughtful consideration, and, if you think our reasoning good, reasonable, and sound, kindly use your influence with your honourable colleagues on behalf of the carriage industry, that it may continue to prosper and do its share towards the prosperity of the adopted home of our fathers, and our own home. Again asking for your consideration,

The Hon. R. J. Seddon, Premier.

We are, &c.,

ARTHUR ATKIN.

There is one matter omitted: Some of our young men leave us before the usual time expires; but, as they always better themselves, we put up with the inconvenience.—A. A.

APPENDIX B.

DEAR SIR,—

Wellington, 21st September, 1894.

I beg herewith to supplement the evidence which I gave before the Committee of which you are Chairman, in relation to the Master and Apprentice Bill now before the House. I stated that our firm preferred men of our own training, in preference to the men who have been trained or who have learned their trade elsewhere, and, in corroboration of this statement, I have to say that two of the lads who served their apprenticeship with our firm are now foremen in our employ. This fact, I think, serves to show that colonial workmen are as capable, and can be taught a handicraft-trade equal to that of workmen in any of the older countries.

D. Pinkerton, Esq., M.H.R.

Yours, &c.,

A. SCULLAR.

APPENDIX C.

[Received from the Auckland Employers' Association.]

REPORT of the Sub-committee on the Master and Apprentice Bill: Your committee, having considered this Bill, suggests: 1. That, inasmuch as the Bill provides a rate of wages under a six years' term of apprenticeship, it is requisite to know under which prescribed rate in the third schedule wages would have to be paid under an apprenticeship for, say, from two to four years. Your committee suggests that in a three years' term the apprentice should be paid as follows: For the first year, the average of the two first scales; for the second year, the average of the third and fourth scales; and for the third year, the average of the fifth and sixth scales. 2. The term of probation provided for in section 18—viz., one month—is too short, and should be extended to three, or at least two months, as an apprentice's fitness or liking for a certain handicraft cannot always be ascertained in the former period. 3. As regards section 20 it ought to be made known on what data the decision will be arrived at, as to whether the master or employé is to blame for the latter not satisfactorily learning the handicraft in question. 4. With reference to deposits of pennies in the Post-office Savings-bank, under section 12, your committee think the onus of making the deposits should devolve on the apprentices, so as to save employers the consequent trouble, which would be great in places where many boys and girls are employed. The same object could be attained by requiring the apprentices to make the deposits themselves, if masters have power given them to deduct from wages such sums as the former neglect to bank, together with a prescribed fine, to be paid to the apprentice's credit into the bank. Then a mere presentation of the bank passbook on pay-day would be sufficient. The principle of a portion of the wages of apprentices being paid into the Savings Bank is not objected to. It may be intended to encourage a habit of thrift amongst young people; but your committee thinks the spirit of the measure will be best carried out by requiring the apprentices to take a personal interest in the matter by depositing their own savings under the suggested regulations.

APPENDIX D.

DEAR SIR,—

Auckland, 28th July, 1894.

I have yours of the 24th instant duly to hand, for which please accept my thanks.

I see from the local papers the Minister of Labour is bringing on another Master and Apprentice Bill. Under these circumstances, I hope you will excuse me pointing out how it would affect me, and also very many rising industries. In the making of small tins for butter,

preserved fruits, condensed milk, fish, jam, syrup, spice, &c., boys are required to feed the various processes the tins go through. I have erected a plant costing over £2,000, the most complete in New Zealand; this has been of great service to many rising industries by being able to get tins cheaply; all this greatly helps. Take butter in tins, for export, one customer used something like 200,000 one- and two-pound tins, and, when I tell you I am making about 30,000 small tins weekly, you can see how this has grown. Now, as all this kind of work is principally boy labour, and cannot be classed as skilled labour; to do so would simply mean a greatly increased cost, if men had to do it, so much that I am sure it would prevent many of these tins being used, and what would be used would be imported, even in face of a high duty. As mail is just closing, I will refer again to a few matters, but would just say 90 per cent. of my business is making these small tins. If I had to bind boys to learn a trade, it would be impossible for me to do so. In my tinsmith branch we have no boys employed, as the class of work is too heavy. What I think you might instill would be to have skilled labour clearly defined, without injury. Of one thing I am sure: if the proposed Act is passed, it will stop enterprise in every direction.

I remain, &c.,

The Hon. E. Mitchelson.

ALEX. HARVEY, Auckland.

APPENDIX E.

DEAR SIR,—

Auckland, 30th August, 1894.

I have read carefully over the Master and Apprentice Bill, and I must say I am surprised that such a measure could be seriously entertained. I will endeavour briefly to state my objections.

Clause 2: "But it does not include occupations that wholly or in part involve unskilled labour." Now, to me, clause 11, clause 16, and in deed of apprenticeship, where it mentions in brackets, "or, if not a handicraft, occupation or calling, as the case may be," would infer that all employes under eighteen years of age must be bound, whether the labour is skilled or unskilled. I think it would be a serious injustice to any boy to bind him for six years to a job that any child could do.

This binding of apprentices is very objectionable, as I have previously experienced. Take my own case: as no doubt you are aware, I have busy seasons, when fruit, butter, honey, vegetables, &c., are plentiful, I require three times the number of hands that can be employed all the year round; am I to be compelled to pay these hands when there is nothing for them to do? Also, every one knows the fluctuating nature of a business in a young colony, which makes it impossible for an employer to see six years ahead; besides the Bill is so very one-sided, an employer is bound even at death; also, many employers go into other businesses, or give up altogether from many causes, but, according to this Bill, an employer or his executors would be compelled to stick to the deed of apprenticeship: not so the apprentice or his guardian; of course, death would release them. Surely a law to be just must be equitable.

Savings-bank deposits is most ridiculous. I cannot see who this is going to benefit; it will be no benefit to the boy during his apprenticeship, and certainly a very serious matter to his parents; besides, I do not see how this should be saddled on an employer, surely one has enough to do with all the worry attending to one's own business.

Clauses 4 and 5 would be a serious injustice to the unfortunate ones mentioned. I am afraid it would altogether prevent them getting employment anywhere.

I have had several conversations with both parents and masters, all of whom condemn the injurious interference contemplated, and we all wonder what it means. I really begin to think it is quite criminal to be an employer. I am certain of one thing, however, that this Bill will defeat its aim. No employer would attempt to launch out in any degree to extend his business. Instead of so doing he will rather become an importer. Had I time, I might touch on other matters in the Bill. It is very evident this Bill has been drafted by the labour agitators, who played such havoc a few years ago.

I would like to point to another very objectionable clause—namely, that the Governor in Council may decide this, that, and the other. I hold, it would be impossible to do this fairly with any political body.

Please send a wire on receipt when this Bill is likely to come before the House. I would like to be present to hear it discussed, if I can possibly get away from business.

I remain, &c.,

Hon. E. Mitchelson.

ALEX. HARVEY.

APPENDIX F.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 28th September, 1894.

I have been requested by the Executive of the New Zealand Boot Manufacturers' Association to lay before the Labour Bills Committee their views on the question of the Master and Apprentice Bill, feeling that as they represent one side of an important colonial industry they are thus justified in claiming the attention of your Committee on this important subject.

1. We submit that the old Act now in force fully meets the reasonable requirements of both the interested parties.

2. That the new Bill is a partial measure, and does not protect equally the interests of both.

3. That the general tenor of the Bill is likely to, in many instances, encourage a spirit of disobedience on the part of the apprentice towards the master, as the inspector practically holds the position the master should occupy, but without any responsibility.

4. That in the past the manufacturers have not charged any premium for teaching the apprentice any branch of the trade; but if the proposed Bill becomes law, the effect will be to cause manufacturers to consider the advisability of demanding a premium, to compensate them for the

responsibilities incurred under the Act; otherwise the tendency will be not to employ apprentices, which will prevent boys from learning the various trades.

5. That, on the question of excellency of workmanship, the Bill is totally unnecessary, as the majority of our best workmen of to-day have been trained in New Zealand.

6. That manufacturers contend that apprentices are fully protected by the old Act, together with the new Factories Act, and any further interference by the Legislature would operate to the disadvantage of the youth of the colony.

I have, &c.,

JAS. A. FROSTICK,

President, New Zealand Boot Manufacturers' Association.

To the Chairman, Labour Bills Committee, Wellington.

APPENDIX G.

SIR,—

Wellington, 16th October, 1894.

In re Master and Apprentice Bill (No. 2): I have no objection to apprenticing boys in my business so long as I am the sole judge as to their fitness, and to the rate of wages I should pay them during the time they are being taught. To show that my apprentices have been thoroughly satisfied with my arrangement, I have only one man working in the shop tinsmithing who did not start as an apprentice.

The time specified in the Bill that a boy may be employed on probation would not enable me to judge of the fitness of a boy I wished to apprentice, or give him time to ascertain if he liked the trade. Then, there are always a number of boys required in a factory, not necessarily to learn the trade, and it would surely be unnecessarily vexatious to have to change these lads every month to comply with the Bill, as provided in clause 18.

The Bill generally appears to me to be drawn up wholly in the interests of the apprentice. No protection is provided for the master, in the event of parents or guardians of apprentices removing to another country or other part of the colony, and insisting on taking their boys with them, where by so doing the master must suffer loss; twice I have been put to great inconvenience by this, and the discipline of my factory been endangered. On the other hand the master is threatened with penalties for every trivial offence under the Bill.

As to the wages specified, I do not think any master could afford to pay such increases. Necessarily for the first two or three years an apprentice does not yield any profit to his master, so that, if he is to get no profit in the last years, it would be better to have no apprentices at all. In my case, all hands out of their apprenticeship work piece-work, and this is the only way in which I could ascertain the cost of my goods; consequently, there is no standard wage by which an apprentice's wages could be fixed as provided. I fix the wages of the apprentice, and, when they have got on with their work a bit, probably in the third year, they are required to make out a bill of their work the same as the piece-workers; and on whatever they have made, valued at piece-work price, over and above their wages, they receive a stated portion. This provision is not mentioned in the deed of apprenticeship, but is paid voluntarily by me to encourage those who are industriously inclined, and works better, I am sure, than any hard and fast standard as fixed by the Third Schedule of Bill.

Such an Act as proposed will, I feel sure, tend to alienate rather than encourage good-feeling between master and apprentice.

I am, &c.,

J. A. PLIMMER.

The Chairman, Labour Bills Committee, Wellington.

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