

Mr. D. GOLDIE, Auckland, examined. (No. 12.)

*Mr. Goldie*: There are just one or two points in connection with this matter that I wish to refer to; the first is in connection with the imports to New Zealand. The imports of timber are increasing. During 1899 the timber imported amounted to £69,000, and in 1900 to £83,000. Mr. White told you he represented a great industry—one of the largest we have in Auckland. He has forgotten to tell you the industry has only been able to pay one dividend of 2½ and one of 3 per cent. So that with the present favourable circumstances if they can only pay from 2½ to 3½ per cent. in twelve years, what will they be able to do when this additional burden is put upon their shoulders? It means almost absolute ruin. There are two or three things I would like to speak about in this Factories Bill. It is a great mistake to say a factory shall be composed of two or more persons employed in a building in any handicraft, or in preparing or manufacturing goods for trade or sale. If a father and son, or mother and daughter, work in their home in the preparation of any goods for sale, it becomes a factory within the meaning of the Act, say—why the thing is absolutely absurd. Take a monumental mason: he has a yard, and his yard is enclosed by a fence, and that is defined as a factory, the definition of “factory” being simply “an enclosure.” In section 13 there is an innovation never introduced before. It makes provision there that the local body of a particular district shall be the umpire in case of dispute. The Government send their Inspector round, and he objects to certain things in the plans of a factory; then the local body becomes the umpire—it has to find an expert to determine whether those things are to be put there or not. For that, the Government takes all the credit under the Bill, and all the fines inflicted are paid into the Consolidated Fund, and the local body has to find the expert and pay for it. Then, with respect to the number of hours: We object, of course, in Auckland to there being less than forty-eight hours. The Bill, although it makes the forty-five hours, says no person shall work more than four hours without a meal. You must stop, then, at 12 o'clock on Saturdays. You cannot dismiss the men and ask them to come back at 1 o'clock. The Bill also reduces the amount of overtime. The Bill is not very clear upon that, however. It says you shall not work more than three hours in any day, or more than two days in any week. What is really meant, I suppose, is, you shall work three hours on two days. That is a very difficult matter for us. In Auckland we try to compete with America in connection with the island trade. The boat arrives on the Friday night, and goes away on the following Wednesday. We cannot work our men to produce what they require in the islands owing to these restrictions, and we shall simply have to send that vessel back without the timber. You see the absurdity of the thing. You are trying to cultivate a trade in the islands, and have built a vessel for that purpose, and after doing that you say, You shall not supply these people, because we shall not allow you to work your men overtime. Then, in connection with your large buildings in Auckland. They are often constructed of special sizes of timber, and, as the lengths and sizes are not always in stock, we have to cut the timber and get it seasoned whilst the building is in course of construction. We have to work our men overtime to get this timber stacked and ready; if not, the timber is put into the building unfit to be used. Again, we have got to bring our timber one hundred miles, and even a greater distance, from the coast. It is towed by steamer. The timber is towed by steamer, and she sometimes has to take shelter in ports owing to the weather, and during that time our men may, at times, have to stand idle. When it is teeming with rain for days together the men outside have to knock off, and then the mill is blocked and compelled to remain idle for a time. Under this Bill these men, deprived of their work for the time being, cannot make that time good, simply because you cannot allow them under these circumstances. You must put on a night-shift. If you work two sets of men it can only be in the mill itself. The men in the yard have all that work to pick up, and we always find it a most difficult matter to work the two shifts to get the timber stacked the next day. The whole thing is kept in a litter, because each log carries four classes of timber—first rough, heart, the medium, and the second-class. It is all carefully sorted out and stacked away, and you cannot do it at night with artificial light. On the other hand, you may say this: if you cannot work your night-shift you must increase your machinery to be ready when a spurt comes. To that we reply: there are industries simply ruined, carrying thousands of pounds' worth of machinery; they cannot be used to advantage. You will have our mills burdened with a lot of machinery only to be used on certain occasions. It is impossible, absurd, and means ruination to the mills themselves. You propose time and a half as overtime; we propose time and a quarter. We all know that the working of overtime means a loss to ourselves. The men cannot keep up the speed if they have to work for long beyond the usual hours. Then, we object, of course, to the payment of holidays; if the men are going to be paid time and a half, it does seem a monstrous thing the masters should be called upon to pay these men on holidays. For these six days they are to receive full pay, while at the same time they would not work one hour extra unless you pay them time and a half. The Bill claims overtime for each one of them. The Bill says any man who has worked twenty days during the six months preceding a holiday shall be entitled to overtime. These holidays have to be paid to any man who has worked these twenty days. Say a man starts to work for me on the 1st August, and after working twenty days passes on to a second employer, and so on, he can claim overtime from all of his employers. If you cannot claim one hour extra labour from a man without paying him time and a half, what right have we to pay him for a week when he does nothing? With respect to my own business, in the first place the holidays would mean to me a loss of £90. I shall lose also on the hours £390, so that my own particular industry would lose to the extent of £480, leaving out the indirect loss upon the machinery when it is lying idle. If this Bill is given effect to, it means we shall be compelled to raise the price of timber to meet these liabilities. To raise the price of timber means to check the industry. We have this Conciliation Board everlastingly worrying us. At present we have the carters before the Conciliation Board in Auckland, and we have already had to deal with them in connection with