

38. *Mr. Hardy.*] You speak of being able to land American doors at 9s. 6d., and your kauri doors are 11s. 6d.?—Yes.

39. How much do you pay in wages for the cost of making a door—the cost of production?—I reckon it 11s. 6d. a door. In speaking on plain cost of wages, about 5s.

40. *Mr. Tanner.*] Mr. White used these words when giving evidence, speaking of a charge for insurance on workmen's wages: "The new Act gives an extra penalty of £100, which is unfair." What do you mean by the "new Act," Mr. White?—I mean this Factories Bill before us. We pay about 1¼ per cent. on our wages to the insurance companies under the Compensation Act, and clause 35 of this Bill provides that there is a further penalty of £100. It says: "If, in consequence of any such default as aforesaid, an accident occurs, causing death or bodily injury to any person, then, in addition to the occupier's liability under the last preceding section, he shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding £100, the whole or any part of which may, in such manner as the Minister directs, be applied for the benefit of the person injured, or of his family or dependants if he has been killed. The penalty imposed by this section shall be deemed to be in lieu of any penalty imposed by 'The Inspection of Machinery Act, 1882,' in respect of the corresponding default under that Act. The occupier shall not be liable under this section if proceedings under the last preceding section to recover the penalty thereby imposed in respect of the default have been taken and dismissed on the merits within one month before the accident occurred. Nothing in this section shall operate to in any way relieve the occupier from any liability which, independently of this Act, he may incur for damage or compensation in respect of the accident or its consequences."

41. There is one point here, and that is with respect to the working fifty-four and fifty-eight hours a week?—Our mills in the country work fifty-two hours.

42. I suppose they prefer to ask you to represent them in a general way rather than send a direct representative? We can understand their opposition up there to the Bill if they are working fifty-eight hours?—I think there is only the one mill working fifty-eight hours.

43. *Mr. Bollard.*] Are your shares at a premium or at a discount?—I do not think it is a fair thing to pull my unfortunate company to pieces.

Mr. GEORGE HENRY BLACKWELL, Kaiapoi, examined. (No. 14.)

*Mr. Blackwell:* Generally speaking, we are not opposed to the principal—I may say the greater part of the provisions of this Bill. We have not the slightest objection to the portions of the Bill as far as the Inspectors appointed by the Government, or the requirements of sanitary conditions, and so on, are concerned. Our own particular industry has been inspected by a number of the members of the Committee, by the Minister of Labour, by the Chief Secretary for Labour, and others; and the result has been that from every one of them we have received commendation for same. I just wish to emphasize what has been said already with regard to restricting the hours of labour. This is the third year in which I have appeared before this Committee on this very point. We, however, agreed to the forty-eight hours cheerfully. Formerly we worked fifty-four hours, and voluntarily reduced the hours from fifty-four to forty-eight without any corresponding reduction in wages; but any further reduction must be followed by a reduction in wages. The provisions in the Act appear to me to leave no room for discrimination at all. Take the woollen industry: there is no physical strain at all upon the men employed. I am bound to say I think in the case of 75 per cent. of the men employed in the woollen-mills, as far as the physical strain of the work is concerned, their places could be taken to-morrow by boys. They are working under the most favourable conditions you could possibly find. They are protected from the weather in winter-time, the rooms are warm, and there is no loss of time; and we contend, sir, that, in view of the fact that a great part of the work is done by the machines and not by the men, it is imposing a serious penalty upon the company by keeping not only the men away from work but the machines lying idle. There is a lot of very costly machinery there, and, as I say, the machines do the work. The physical labour in connection with them is very light, and if the men are taken away the machines are standing there, and it is equal to about 8½ per cent. of our output, which is a very serious matter and worry to us in view of the competition with imported goods. The reduction of hours would necessarily mean an increase in the cost of our goods. The effect, therefore, followed by an increase in imports in our particular line of £91,500 above the previous year, which in itself was a record, may be imagined. The previous year was a record, and yet the result of the advance in price caused by the increased value of wool led, I have no doubt at all, to a very large increase in the imports of these particular lines. Then, sir, we worked night and day, and, while we quite agree with the forty-eight hours, we think that the hours might be left to be arranged mutually, or to the satisfaction of the Government Inspector. We have every confidence if we were allowed to work forty-eight hours, and if the Committee see fit to make that recommendation—to leave the actual working hours subject to the control or approval of the Government Inspector—we shall be satisfied. Our night-shifts work nine hours for five nights, and under the provisions of this Bill can only work forty hours. It will naturally mean a very serious loss, not only to us, but to those men, and if the principle of the forty-eight hours is agreed upon that will be the actual time. Why, the manager of the Mosgiel Mill the other day said that their night-workers actually petitioned to be allowed to work eleven hours for four nights in the week, so as to get off at 10 o'clock on Friday night; and the arrangement seems to be working very satisfactorily. We work nine hours on the four nights, and make up the balance of the time in the last night. We think it would be satisfactory if the principle of the forty-eight hours is agreed upon, and we do not wish to increase the hours. I might here point out that we are in competition with other manufacturers who work very considerably longer hours. In reading the report of the Federation Commission, I note the Chief Inspector of Factories in New South Wales gave evidence before the