

Commission, and said, so far as the men workers were concerned, they averaged sixty hours per week. We think, if the Committee can see their way, they should make a recommendation in this direction: keep the forty-eight hours asked for, and allow the hours to be arranged with the operatives themselves. The principle of conciliation we quite approve of, and we are prepared to meet them and fix the hours to suit their convenience. It has worked so in the past very satisfactorily. In winter-time we vary the hours, because it gets dark in the evening, and they come earlier in the morning. It is all done by mutual arrangement, and so far has worked very satisfactorily. With regard to the question of overtime, if we could possibly arrange it we would never work one hour overtime; but there are contingencies arising, more especially in connection with our clothing-factories, where you cannot help it. With regard to seasonable goods, more especially the ladies' fashionable lines, we cannot get the orders until the season is advanced, as often the fashion departments are late in getting them, and then it is a complete rush, and the operatives are obliged to be taken back to work. But, that being the case, we think the present arrangement very much preferable to that obtaining in the proposed Bill. Time and a half is too heavy a penalty altogether to pay, and we shall have to lose a considerable amount of trade by it. Time and a quarter, as at present provided, with the stipulation that the employes are not to work more than two nights in succession, we are quite prepared to accept just now. There is a further increase in the holidays, which is a very heavy impost. Our wages and salaries are £1,200 per week, and every additional day means a tax upon the company of £200; and we think the provisions of this Bill are unreasonable in increasing the number of holidays—the days we receive no return whatever for the wages we are called upon to pay. Reference has been made to that anomaly in the Bill called "forty-five hours." I think that would, of course have to be remedied; it only allows forty-four hours to be worked. Section 32—"Wages payable for holidays." Subsection (2): "For the purposes of this section 'wage-earner,' with respect to any specified whole holiday or half-holiday, means any person who is paid by time-wages, whatever the time, and has been employed in the factory for at least twenty days during the six months next preceding the whole holiday, or for at least five days during the month next preceding the half-holiday, whether such employment has been on consecutive days or not, and whether the wage-earner has been continuously in the service of the occupier or not." It is very crude. It must have crept into the Bill by mistake. You will see the openings that are made for those really desirous of making very good wages are very good indeed, and I take it that that particular clause at any rate is not at all likely to go through as it is. Clause 35 provides a "penalty for death or injury through default of occupier." Under the Workers' Compensation Act the worker is protected. Why should a special penalty be inflicted upon the employer, of £100, in this particular case? It is really providing two penalties for one offence. I do not think that that is a principle that ought to be allowed by the State at all. The penalty is already provided for, and I think that particular clause ought to be struck out. Then, with regard to the Bill itself, it does appear to give full opportunities, at any rate to me, to override altogether the principle of conciliation that has been established by the Legislature, and to a large extent, among the employers especially, has been agreed upon. Why, when the power is conceded to the Court, and used by the Court, do we want special provision made in this Factories Bill limiting the hours, when the Court itself has the power to establish the hours? If at any time we may have to appear before the Court, if we can make it appear reasonable that our operatives are working forty-eight hours, the Court has power to reduce them; but I do not see why, by Act of Parliament, we should practically take the decisions from the Conciliation Board and the Arbitration Court. The majority of the woollen-mill operatives throughout the colony wish the forty-eight hours. We are to come before the Arbitration Court, and our own operatives at the woollen-mill at Kaiapoi are appealing for forty-five hours; but they are a very unhappy family on that question, and I think if a ballot was taken in our own mill the result would prove that the majority of the people still desire the forty-eight hours. With this exception all the other mills in the colony desire the forty-eight hours.

Mr. J. C. MACKY, Auckland, examined.

*Mr. Macky:* On behalf of the woollen-mills, I will also confirm what has been said; and, with regard to the Onehunga Woollen-mills, it is a very serious matter for the workers. It is piecework there, and the men in those mills are working fifty hours a week, because they are earning splendid wages by working piecework, and the women and boys are working forty-eight hours, and we can hardly get these people to stop to get their pay, they are so eager. Girls are earning £1 15s. on piecework of forty-eight hours, and if we are going to reduce their hours from forty-eight to forty-four these girls will earn so much the less. The workers in the mill will earn a great deal less under the new Bill, and they simply cannot help it.

Mr. BLACKWELL, continued.

44. *Mr. Hardy.*] How many hands do you employ, Mr. Blackwell?—Eleven hundred and fifty.

45. And what are the weekly wages?—Over £1,200.

46. What is the capital invested altogether?—Paid-up capital, £100,000, and £24,000 reserve.

47. Do you know of your knowledge that the workers have asked for the proposed changes which are now in this Bill?—No; all I know, in our citation before the Board of Conciliation, one of the points submitted was that there should be forty-five hours. I know that the operatives are very much divided. In fact, since the formation of the union the thing has split to pieces.

48. Do you think it is outside your own people's hands, this working the thing up?—It is outside influence.

49. The agitating did not take place within your own people?—It originated from without.

50. *Mr. Ell.*] With respect to the forty-five hours, that does not obtain with regard to the factory?—Only the woollen-mills. With regard to the clothing-factory, we only work forty-five