

78. *Mr. Ell.*] You said there is a good deal of strife amongst the operatives on account of the abolition of piecework?—I am informed the weavers, who are all on piecework, prefer to remain on piecework, and I know there was a good deal of strife over it, and is still; and I understand a number of them have left the union on account of that. They never wanted their privilege interfered with at all.

79. You are aware of the fact that before they can adopt any of the proposals made it must be submitted to all the members of the union?—Yes, I know that. Probably 75 per cent., or at any rate a large proportion of the union, take no trouble at all.

80. *Mr. Arnold.*] They must vote under the Act?—They must vote, but they take no trouble. I think I could suggest a way by which the present arrangement could be improved with regard to the constitution of our Conciliation Boards.

81. *Mr. Hardy.*] Do you object to the payment for holidays, Mr. Blackwell?—Well, we have got along with what we have got; but there seems an annual increase, to which we strongly object.

82. You say a large number of your people are doing piecework: how do you manage the holidays in that case?—They do not get any pay in that case, of course. The pieceworkers get the holidays, but without pay; only those on regular weekly wages get the holidays with pay.

83. You told us your company always pays 7 per cent. per annum?—It has averaged that for twenty-two years. In 1890 we paid no dividend at all; and I do not know if the Committee would like to hear it, Mr. Chairman, but the morning before yesterday, before leaving, we had our meeting and passed our statement of accounts, and we practically show on the working of the year $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.; but we are not prepared for any further impositions on that. We have nothing to carry to reserve this year.

84. You believe yours has been one of the most successful companies in New Zealand?—Yes.

85. Do you know of any loss prior to the present company taking it up?—I only know from hearsay. They lost nearly all of their capital.

86. You took it up?—The plant and everything was sold.

87. You got a valuable plant for almost nothing?—We got a plant that cost them £45,000 for £15,000, and with the exception of that year to which I referred we have made a profit every year; and during that year it was owing to circumstances over which we had no control—the strike—with the exception of that one year, when we made a loss of £5,000.

88. *Mr. Tanner.*] What holidays did you pay your hands before “The Factories Act, 1894,” was passed?—I do not remember.

89. Has it not been customary in most large establishments to pay the men wages for Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, and Queen's Birthday?—Yes. As a considerable employer on my own account, I have always paid for and been in the habit of giving all you have named, and a week's holiday to the men in turn, but no overtime is paid. This refers to warehouses and shops.

90. “The Factories Act, 1894,” stipulated five holidays should be paid for, which was a smaller number than what the firms had been in the habit of paying for voluntarily?—Yes, I think warehouses do. The major number of employers not under the Act now pay for holidays not provided in the Act, and, without having any violent antagonism at all to labour, we think it is a fair way the present arrangement is carried out. In Canterbury they think nothing of Labour Day, and we think it is a pity they are compelled to pay for it.

91. How long has it been since Labour Day was instituted in Canterbury?—About twelve years ago, I think.

92. Do you work your people on Labour Day?—We never do it at the mill, and at the clothing-factory if they want a holiday we give it to them, but without wages. We are prepared to find them the work if they want to work. We leave it entirely to them.

93. You are aware that a short Act was passed a year or two ago declaring Labour Day a public holiday?—Yes.

94. And now Labour Day is included with five other days in this Bill, stating these as public holidays which are to be paid for?—Yes.

95. You have been in the habit of paying for six, and sometimes more, in the past?—No; we have only paid for those that we have been compelled to pay under the Act.

96. I went to work in a factory over twenty years ago, and the first thing my eye fell on was a notice that nine particular holidays should be paid for. Regarding the payment for holidays to pieceworkers, how would you arrange to pay wages to pieceworkers on these particular days: have you ever considered that?—They would not be paid at all.

97. Does not the Act say every person employed in a factory shall be paid on those particular days?—That is as wage-earners.

98. Are they not wage-earners?—Not within the definition of the Act.

Mr. JOSEPH SPARROW, Dunedin, examined. (No. 15.)

Mr. Sparrow: I am an employer of labour in Dunedin in the foundry line. I have been for some time employing probably three hundred hands, and it has always been the custom ever since I can remember—about fifty years—to pay by the hour. We have always paid our men by the hour. They are paid for the number of hours they work. Many of our men would not like to be paid by the week, except office-men and foremen, and so on. But the workmen in our trade prefer being paid by the hour, because there is a great deal of our work done at night and holidays, when other people are making holiday and asleep—so that the other people might not be laid off their work the next day. For instance, there is dredge-work. There are many of those dredges, and the men are only paid by the day; and then there are factory repairs and breakdowns, and if this is not done on holidays or at night the consequence is the men employed in these places would be laid off the work for two or three days. The same applies to ships and buildings. Many of