

their work. Repairs may take seven or eight hours. A steamer arriving late with His Majesty's mails may break down in the harbour, or outside, and at 5 o'clock we may be called upon to make these repairs. One cannot go to the department at 5 o'clock to get a permit, and we therefore work on, and must evade the Act. You cannot duplicate the hands. We cannot take up a certain piece of work, carry it on to a certain stage, and then let another man come in and take it up and carry it to a conclusion. That cannot be done in our trade. Then there is the question as regards the dining-room. It would be most inconvenient for an engineering firm to provide a dining-room. Most of the engineering shops have a large area of open space, and for the most part the men and lads prefer going out into the sunshine to eat their lunch, and then to have a game of football and exercise themselves a bit. And in wet weather they have these great open spaces which obtain in the shops to themselves. The pattern-makers' shops have fairly clean and open spaces in them, and the hands eat their meals there. I have put the main features in this Bill as it affects us before you, gentlemen. Our work has principally to do with repairs.

Mr. J. J. NIVEN examined. (No. 27.)

Mr. J. J. Niven, of The Spit, Napier, said he would indorse all Mr. Luke and the others had said in reference to the engineering trade, as it would be affected by the Bill before the Committee.

182. *Rt. Hon. R. J. Seddon.*] What overtime are you paying, Mr. Luke?—Time and a quarter for the first two hours, and time and a half afterwards.

183. Is that under an award?—That has always been the conditions of the trade.

184. Then, if the Act was so amended as to carry out what you are doing at the present time, you have no objection?—The present Act meets the conditions of our trade in that particular.

185. In asking to be exempted, you do not want to be able to make a law for yourselves?—No; we ask that the present conditions might exist, and they provide against any of these outrageous circumstances that might be in contemplation.

186. *Mr. Collins.*] You have no objection to it as it stands, the present Act?—The Court of Conciliation and Arbitration provides all that we want.

187. *Rt. Hon. R. J. Seddon.*] Have there been any complaints from the men as to the accommodation you have made for them?—No.

188. *Mr. Arnold.*] You say, in your opinion, Mr. Cable, the men are quite able to take care of themselves?—That is my experience, both as a worker and as an employer.

189. Have you a branch down South?—No.

190. Have you an association in New Zealand?—Yes.

191. Are you a member, and does the majority of the employers here belong to it?—Yes.

192. Have you any arrangement amongst yourselves with regard to the employment of a man who leaves another employer?—No.

193. It is not in your rules?—No.

194. *Mr. Laursen.*] You say you object to the whole Act, Mr. Cable?—I mean the alterations in the proposed Act to what is existing at present.

195. You do not object to the sanitary regulations, &c.?—No. There is one point I would mention, and that is this extra £100 penalty for accidents. Well, I maintain, and I believe I voice the other employers, if the machinery is under inspection, and the employer guards that machinery according to the Inspector's ideas, that the Workers' Compensation Act is plenty powerful enough to protect the employé without this additional clause of £100.

196. *Mr. Bollard.*] You do, I understand, a good deal of repairs to the shipping, and repairs generally: agricultural implements, for instance?—We do very little in the agricultural line. We do a few jobs now and again, but the settlers will not wait for long.

197. If you came under the provisions of this Bill, if it became law, you could not do that sort of work?—Not without very great loss of time and inconvenience to the customer.

198. You mean you could not get the work done in the time?—Oh, no.

199. And inconvenience would be caused, and loss?—Yes.

200. You mean by that that you could not get men to put on as extra men. You are limited in this Act to a certain number of hours' overtime, and that is the reason why you could not get the repairs done quickly. You would not be able to put on a second lot of men?—You cannot keep men on the shelf. We have got to study our hands; and I may tell the Committee that to keep our men on steady work we have been taking new work at merely a nominal profit—simply to keep them about you. Repairs will not keep a shop steady, and we have to keep our men handy so as they can do those repairs and other work. We have to take merely a nominal rate to keep our men about us. Men will not work three days in a week for me if they can get full work anywhere else. Besides, the difficulty, as far as doing repairs for breakdown jobs, is, you cannot duplicate the men. The men having the ability or the direct knowledge undertake shift about. Take a heavy smith, for instance: there is only one in each shift, and the moulder, if it is a breakdown job, knows the full number of men to send. He must finish the job. It is impossible to go and get another man to finish that job after 5 o'clock.

201. Take the case of a breakdown in sawmill machinery brought into your shop on a Saturday, and you are requested to have that done by midday on the Monday, so that there would be no delaying, perhaps, one hundred and twenty men depending on that machinery on the Monday?—That would be simply an impossibility.

202. And the men would have to wait until it was done in the ordinary way?—Yes, if it took a week.

203. *Mr. Barclay.*] You mentioned something about giving thirty-two days to the men?—Yes.