

## MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

(MR. J. A. MILLAR, CHAIRMAN.)

WEDNESDAY, 14TH AUGUST, 1901.

Mr. FREDERICK WAYMOUTH examined. (No. 1.)

In reply to the Chairman, Mr. Waymouth said he had definite instructions to represent the New Zealand Refrigerating Company, at Burnside, Oamaru; the Canterbury Frozen Meat Company, at Belfast and Fairfield; the Christchurch Meat Company, at Islington, Timaru, and Picton; the Frozen Meat Company at the Bluff and Maitara; the Longburn Freezing-works; and Nelson Brothers, at Tomoana and Gisborne.

*The Chairman:* We will be very pleased, Mr. Waymouth, if you will give us the principal objections you take to the Bill now before the Committee.

*Mr. Waymouth:* The clauses we principally object to are the freezing companies being included under the operations of clauses 18, 19, and 25—viz., Clause 18: "Subject to the provisions of this Act, a person shall not be employed in or about a factory (a) for more than forty-five hours, excluding meal-times, in any one week; nor (b) for more than eight hours, excluding meal-times, in any one day; nor (c) for more than four hours continuously without an interval of at least one hour for dinner; nor (d) at any time after one o'clock in the afternoon of one working-day in each week, as hereinafter mentioned: (e) in the case of females, at any time between the hours of six o'clock in the evening and eight in the morning, provided that, with the written consent of the Inspector, seven o'clock in the morning may, during such months as are specified in such consent, be substituted in lieu of eight o'clock in the morning, but so that the hours of work are not extended beyond eight hours: (f) in the case of boys under sixteen years of age, at any times between the hours of six o'clock in the evening and a quarter to eight o'clock in the morning. In order to prevent any evasion or avoidance of the foregoing limits of working-hours, all work done by any person employed in a factory for the occupier elsewhere than in the factory (whether the work is or is not connected with the business of the factory) shall be deemed to be done whilst employed in the factory, and the time shall be counted accordingly." Clause 19: "The prescribed number of working-hours may from time to time be extended, but not (a) more than three hours in any day, or (b) more than two days in any week, or (c) more than thirty days in any year, or (d) on any holiday or half-holiday. On every such occasion a person shall not be employed more than four hours continuously without having an interval of at least half an hour for rest and refreshment. Every person who is employed during such extended hours under this section shall be paid therefor at half as much again as the ordinary rate: Provided that when the ordinary rate is by time, and not by piece-work, the overtime rates shall not be less than sixpence per hour for those persons whose ordinary wages do not exceed ten shillings per week, and ninepence per hour for all other persons so employed; and shall be paid at the first regular pay-day thereafter. The occupier of a factory shall at all times keep a record-book, called the 'Overtime-book,' wherein shall be entered a correct record showing in the case of each person who is employed during such extended hours under this section the name of the assistant and the respective dates and periods of such employment. The Overtime-book shall at all times be open to the inspection of the persons employed and of the Inspector. The Inspector may at any time require the occupier to verify the entries in the Overtime-book by statutory declaration in such form as may be prescribed by regulations." Section 2, clause 25, viz: "If the work is done elsewhere than in a registered factory, the occupier of the factory by whom the work was let or given out shall cause to be affixed to each garment or other article upon which the work has been done a label in the prescribed form; and if he makes default in so doing he shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding one pound for each article whereof the default is made." We would ask the Committee to exclude the freezing companies from the operation of the Act so far as these clauses are concerned. The principal reasons are that it would be impossible for us to carry on our business and comply with these conditions. In the first place, our machinery is like that of a ship at sea—it must be run consecutively for the whole twenty-four hours per day. That work is done by three sets of men working watches of eight hours each. It would be impossible to carry on the business of the freezing companies and comply with the provisions of the Factories Bill. With regard to the shifts of eight hours, it would be impossible to comply with the Saturday half-holiday, or an hour off for dinner. This is impossible, because the men must have their meal in the engine-room during a slack time—just as they can get it. The next point would be as to the uncertainty and irregularity of the supply of stock. We are largely dependent upon the train-services for a supply of stock at the works. The men dealing with the stock have to be on hand at all hours when the railway tells them that trains are arriving with stock, which must be discharged on arrival. When stock does arrive it is killed out on the following day, owing to the fact that almost all the freezing companies holding paddocks have no feed in them; and, even if the owners do not complain, we might get into trouble with the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Take our Canterbury works, for instance: the largest portion of stock coming in arrives at Islington at 7.30 in the evening, and that must be discharged and put into paddocks on arrival. At Belfast the largest proportion of stock arriving there from the north reaches the works at 8 p.m., and has to be discharged and placed in the paddocks for the night. In the same way the stock arriving by road is very frequently interrupted by high rivers and by various other causes.