

the wool off the skins the work there is exceptionally uncertain, the men being liable to be called out at any time of the night or day should a change of temperature make it necessary. The sweating process is actually a matter of time and climate. A change to warm weather will frequently make the necessity arise for dealing with two days' skins in one. Frequently the men will be turned out at 1 o'clock in the morning to pull skins which in a steady temperature would not be needed to be pulled until the next day. Of course, in fellmongeries where the skins are "painted" these things do not arise to the same extent as when they are treated under the sweating process. But there are so many exigencies in connection with the skin, which is a very valuable part of the sheep, that a restriction of hours would make the fellmongery trade in the colony connected with the freezing companies absolutely worthless, and the whole process would have to be discontinued and the skins shipped home to England as dry skins. With regard to clause 25, subsection (2), page 11, you will notice it provides, "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." Well, in connection with that, most of the freezing companies have their bags made off the premises by their employes' wives, or by what you may term "pensioners." Take my firm, which makes probably seven hundred thousand bags in a year: it would be a piece of nonsense to attach a label to each bag to say it was not made on the company's premises. I think I have said enough to show the Committee that, with the existence of the clauses I have named, it would be impossible for the freezing companies to carry on their businesses with the restrictions that would be made. We would ask the Committee, therefore, to make an exclusion of these clauses in favour of these freezing companies. We have now worked for eighteen years, and always very amicably, with our employes. Our employes know that it is necessary for the work to be done in the season, and if they cannot work long hours during that season they cannot live. Further than that, with regard to the freezing companies, the competition is getting keen, especially with South America. So far as the Canterbury District is concerned, the competition in England is being every year felt more seriously. Restrictive legislation such as this would so seriously hamper the business that I hardly know how we could carry on. It would so seriously hamper the business, I think, that the farmers would probably turn their attention to something else, and the freezing industry would probably dwindle.

Mr. DILNOT SLADDEN examined. (No. 2.)

*Mr. Sladden*: I am going to point out that apart from the freezing-works there are some industries, especially those connected with perishable produce, such as milk, meat, fish, &c., with which it would be difficult to control the hours in the same way as can be done with manufactures generally, or those dealing with non-perishable commodities. At any rate, I feel certain, as has been shown by Mr. Weymouth, that if it is attempted to apply these hard-and-fast regulations the result will certainly be to add to the cost of getting the produce into the markets of the world, and in this way will put an additional load on the producer. To give the Committee some idea of the manner in which the proposed Bill will affect the industry with which I am connected, I will give a rough outline of a summer day's work at the Ngahauranga Freezing-works. After an ordinary day's killing there would be, say, 2,500 sheep and eighty bullocks to be got into the freezing-chambers. In order to do that in time, about 2 a.m. the men would start to load the special train for the Waterloo Quay works, which takes 1,200 sheep. At 4 a.m. they would begin to cut down, quarter, and weigh the beef, which would then be passed into the freezing-chambers at Ngahauranga; following this the remainder of the mutton would go into the freezing-chambers at Ngahauranga, and the whole has to be inside the chambers by 8 a.m. so as to avoid the heat of the day. As it is imperative to get the whole of this in before 8 o'clock it cannot be done without starting work between 2 and 3 in the morning. In addition to this, the wagons for the town trade have to be loaded so as to reach town at the earliest about 6 a.m. and the latest about 7.30 a.m. If a ship is loading, about three trucks—say, a thousand carcasses of frozen mutton—would also have to be loaded in time for the special train, so as to be ready for the wharf-lumpers to commence work on the wharf at 8 a.m. During the day proper—from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.—slaughtering and the work of the collateral industries, dealing with skins, fat, offal, preserving meat, &c., are in full swing, and we prefer, if possible, to finish slaughtering by 5 p.m. Owing, however, partly to the scarcity of railway-trucks, as well as a variety of other causes, it is difficult to regulate the supply of stock as accurately as could be wished, and we are at times overdone for two or three days, and then short of work for a similar period. If it is intended that fifty per cent. more should be paid for stock slaughtered after 5 p.m., the tendency will be at times to hold stock for another day which would be better slaughtered at once. Assuming that the slaughtering, which is work the Committee may have in their minds, is finished at 5 p.m., after that hour the offal has to be put into the digesters, the blood has to be removed, coagulated, and dried, and the inside fat has to be put into cold water, while sheep tongues and other portions of meat for preserving have to be put into pickle. The refuse from the digesters, from which the fat has been drawn, at the end of the day has to be pressed and dried before the men leave the manure-works, as well as the last of the blood; and it would be unwise, for sanitary reasons alone, that obstacles should be thrown in the way of finishing up this work in the most thorough manner. We would have the Health Officer inquiring if we were not going to finish up this work completely before the men knocked off work. We have not been in the habit of paying an extra rate for overtime in the tallow, oleo, or manure departments, the number of men put on and the hours at which they start and leave off work having hitherto been adjusted so as to suit the requirements of the business and to satisfy the men. We pay extra for overtime in the freezing-chambers and also in the fellmongery, although in the latter case not anything like fifty per cent. The hours for fellmongering can be more easily adjusted than those for tallow and manure work—