

at any rate, in fellmongeries where the painting process is used, as the chemicals can be mixed of such a strength as to make the skins ready for working at the particular time required. Where, however, the old sweating process is used, which, from some points of view, is the best, men must be turned out to work the skins at any time of the day or night when they are ready. It seems hardly right that work which must inevitably be finished after the main operations are over should be treated, so to speak, as an extra. It should, I think, be recognised that all the necessary work cannot be done simultaneously. I fear that if the Factories Bill be passed in its present form the charges for freezing meat for export will have to be increased. The cost of this work consists mainly of labour, coal being comparatively a small item. Then, with regard to the engineers: At present they work in three eight-hour watches. I hardly think it can have been intended to treat two of these watches as overtime, although that is what the Bill appears to imply. It would, however, certainly prevent the engineer or fireman from taking his dinner or tea with him and eating it, as he does now, in the time for which he is paid. Neither engineers, greasers, nor firemen are constantly at work, and can get plenty of time to eat a meal. I feel quite sure that it is better for them, and that they would prefer to eat their lunch as they can during their eight-hour watch, and have sixteen hours off, than to have a break of an hour, and only fifteen hours off. In addition to this, it would be almost impossible to provide for the break of an hour during the night watches. I cannot see how this part of the work is to be made fit in with a week of forty-five hours. The engineers have never expressed any desire that the system obtaining should be altered. Then, the Bill generally seems to prevent what we have generally been urged to do by the trades and labour representatives, and that is to put on two shifts, where it can be done, in preference to working overtime. If the men do not work too much overtime, they do not ask for more shifts; as I read the Act, they cannot do that. The shift outside the hours of 8 to 5 would be overtime, and extra. I think these are the principal matters to which I wish to draw the attention of the Committee. There seems to be an impression abroad that the hands at freezing-works earn high wages. As a matter of fact, they do not, generally speaking, earn anything more than a moderate wage for the year; but it is correct that they earn the bulk of it—perhaps three-fourths—within six months. Realising the difficulty in such an industry as meat-freezing of providing men with a sufficient yearly income, the management has rather encouraged than otherwise the system by which men have made enough to live upon the whole year by working extra long hours during the few busy months. The men have not been asked to work if they were not inclined, because more men could, of course, have been put on; and the work has really adjusted itself, as I have stated before, to the requirements of the business and also to the satisfaction of those employed. The tendency of any alteration in the direction of the proposed legislation will be to curtail the earnings of the men. There are other matters incident to the business which it would be difficult to reconcile with a day of eight hours or week of forty-five hours, such as the unloading of stock arriving by trains, which come in all hours. Our stock is generally in between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. Then, there is the taking in of butter, rabbits, fish, &c., either for export or local consumption. The difficulty of getting a week's arrivals of stock—say, fifteen thousand or sixteen thousand sheep, and three hundred or four hundred head of cattle—finished exactly at 1 o'clock p.m. on Saturday is almost insuperable. The difficulty of getting casual labour at most freezing-works where ships are being loaded, and the necessity of working at all hours, day and night, when loading in open roadsteads, has also to be considered. The rolling-stock of the Railway Department does not enable us to run the sheep down with great regularity. Our men may have to wait a day or two to send a couple of thousand sheep down from some station. Owing to the loading of sheep in open roadsteads, which has to be carried on at all hours of the night, certain chamber-men have necessarily to be employed.

Mr. EWAN CAMPBELL examined. (No. 3.)

*Mr. Campbell:* What has been said by the two gentlemen who have preceded me really applies to my works; all freezing-works are carried on in much the same way. In my works, at Wanganui, we are rather differently situated as far as getting rid of our produce is concerned. In Wanganui we have to lighter all frozen-meat produce to the open roadstead; and, of course, it is very stormy on the West Coast sometimes, and so when a vessel comes they have to go for their lives to get her loaded. We work all night, and pay the men 1s. 6d. an hour from 8 to 5, and 2s. 6d. an hour afterwards, so that the men are not at all dissatisfied. In fact, it was thought a very great hardship when some of the good people stopped them loading on Sundays; the men made a good thing out of it. They work all night and all day when the ship is there. We are in very much the same position as a ship loading itself. With reference to the half-holiday on Saturday, it would simply mean, as far as our works are concerned, that we would have to knock off on the Friday. To get everything clear at 1 o'clock on Saturday would necessitate leaving off at 5 p.m. on Friday. The offal is generally taken warm from the sheep and put in certain places, and if it is not manipulated on the same evening it is simply ruined; it is a perishable thing. Then, our works have all to be cleaned up after hours; the offal is taken away because it is not allowed to stand there. The whole place is cleaned up.

Mr. MAX EICHELBAUM examined. (No. 4.)

*Mr. Eichelbaum:* People are inclined to look at our industry, as my firm employ about one hundred and fifty men and pay about £10,000 in wages during a period of six months. What applies to the freezing-works applies practically to my business, only my article is very perishable. We cannot take the raw product away until the last sheep is killed. We have to cart it to our house, and have to treat it at once. Runners are a bit "smelly," and unless treated at once it would be a great nuisance. If the freezing-works stopped killing at 5 o'clock, it would take them from 7 to 8 to treat them properly. They have to work sometimes longer and sometimes shorter