

92. You do not object to this Act as far as it applies to the boys?—No.

93. What wages are paid usually in the trade?—Well, for an adult labourer we pay from 6s. to 11s. a day.

94. That is for eight hours?—For forty-eight hours a week.

95. So far as the overtime is concerned, are they paid for that?—They are paid just the ordinary rates.

96. Do your men have complaints about that? Have they asked for extra for overtime?—I have never had a complaint except through a union, and I have not had a complaint from a number of or an individual of my own men.

97. Have you an award you are working under?—We are to have one published to-day.

98. You do not know whether that award will provide for extra wages?—We do not know.

99. The recommendation of the Conciliation Board provided for that, did it not?—Yes.

100. Your objections to this Bill are only as applies to your own calling: you think that you should be exempt?—Yes; as being allied to the freezing industry, and owing to the perishable nature of the goods that we have got to deal with, and the limited time that we have to deal with them in.

101. *Mr. Bollard.*] I think you said, in the event of this Bill being made to apply to your business, it simply meant the skins would be dried and sent out of the colony?—Yes. At the present time I do not think there is a skin treated in the Argentine and very few in Australia, and I do not see why the same thing should not happen here.

102. That would mean that a large number of labourers engaged in the business would be thrown out of employment?—No.

103. You were before the Arbitration Court the other day?—Yes.

104. And were told by some witnesses that in order to give your employes more wages you should give less for your skins?—Yes, they told us that.

105. You know, as a matter of fact, that the principal value of the skin is the wool at the present time?—Taking a green skin to-day, the pelt is worth almost as much as the wool.

106. It ought not to be so?—Yes.

107. Wool is not paying at the present time?—A man cannot grow sheep to-day and sell his skins at 2s. 6d.

108. *Mr. Laurensen.*] How many people do you employ, Mr. Hill, when you are busy?—As many as a hundred and fifty.

109. You said your wages ran from £30,000 to £50,000?—This is paid in the industry generally. My own wages, from £7,000 to £10,000 a year.

110. You are an employer and pretty much in the same way as the freezing companies. Your employes depend in the busy season on making sufficient money so as to tide them over the slack season?—To some extent, but not to the same extent. We seldom come to a dead-stop. There are other sources, such as farmers' dried skins and butchers' skins, which we always get a few of. In the freezing season we put on increased staffs of men, but it is expected that the workmen we keep on throughout the whole year will do the major part of the overtime, and it is a direct gain to them, and they seem to be rather in favour of it than of putting on extra men.

111. You say that pelts and things like that which come down from Christchurch cannot be run on the Lyttelton line only by certain trains, you have to get the railway to shunt them?—They will not bring them by boat-trains; and they tell me they are doing a favour by bringing them down at all when there are no goods-trains running.

112. If this Act came into force it would add so much to the cost of wool-scouring that almost the whole of the wool would be shipped in the grease, and that would mean the farmers who sell to you would lose about 5 per cent. more than they ought, and a large number of men would be thrown out of employment?—The whole of the wool-scouring would be killed. Farmers cannot afford to pay more for scouring now, and the wool-scourer cannot afford to pay any increased cost.

113. *The Chairman.*] What would be the effect on the labour-market in that industry generally if, by any means of legislative pressure or otherwise, you are compelled to employ at different times and intermittently a much larger number of men than you employ now, with the result of having a much larger portion of them out during a considerable portion of the year?—I should think it would be unsatisfactory, because if I do anything at all under the ordinary hours of this Bill I must increase my staff. Take one branch of the trade: I have got to employ six or seven pullers. We try every day in the week to keep those men going until 5 o'clock. Some days the "painters" will get a little bit ahead of them and give them an hour's overtime, and on another day give them an hour short. I should pay these men off and send them home on the days the "painters" were not giving them full work; on other days we might ask these men to work a couple of hours' overtime. I might put extra men on to finish at 3 o'clock. The casual men would get the work, and the ordinary men would think they were being robbed of their overtime. We should make them all casual hands.

114. *Captain Russell.*] Did I understand you to say that, as far as you could see, the only method of increasing the wages would be to reduce the price you gave for the skins?—Yes.

115. Unless you gave a fair price you would get no skins to buy at any price?—No; I could not expect it.

THURSDAY, 15TH AUGUST, 1901.

Mr. PETER HUTSON, Wellington, examined. (No. 7.)

The Chairman called on Mr. Peter Hutson, as representing the Industrial Corporation of New Zealand, to give his views on the Bill before the Committee.

*Mr. Hutson.* Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen, I appear here this morning on behalf of the Industrial Corporation of New Zealand, and also the Industrial Association of Wellington. With