

a very large section of the public would have no opportunity of making their purchases in the day-time, but would have to resort to late shopping; that with ever-increasing rates, taxes, and rent the tradespeople can ill afford to suffer any pecuniary loss. (5.) That to change to Saturday would prejudicially affect the shop-assistants, as a loss of revenue, which must be sustained by the employers, would compel them to diminish the number of those employed. Finally, we submit that the question is of such vital importance to the general public that no alterations should be made in the existing conditions until a *plébiscite* of the people be taken in the district." If it is necessary, and the Bill is intended to be passed, a *plébiscite* of the people should be taken; let them say which day they would rather have, and let the *plébiscite* last for, say, five or seven years, so that this matter will not come up every year and cause a lot of animosity between different tradespeople. Some of them do what we call a wholesale or semi-wholesale trade, and to them it does not matter. They would rather have Saturday, because it would suit them. They have their trade; they send out their travellers, and do not sell their stuff over the counter. The travellers sell it outside. But the small retailer has to depend upon customers coming to his shop, and has to be open when it suits his clients to come. If he is not open when it suits his clients to come, well, the sooner he closes his shop the better, because he cannot exist unless at the pleasure of his clients. I think, gentlemen, that I have here that which will convince almost any one. This is the tape from my cash register [produced]. This length [indicated] shows the purchases for one day, Saturday, and this [indicated] shows them for the Monday. The Saturday record shows within about two of five hundred. There are seventy on this length.

5. *Mr. Ell.*] What day does that represent?—The Monday following. We, gentlemen, are in business to get a living for our wives and families, not for fun; and is it likely we can give up a certainty for an uncertainty when it is not required by the public? I have here a petition signed by 20,370 people in Christchurch.

6. *Mr. Tanner.*] What is the petition?—It was presented to the City Council in January of this year, praying that they would not alter the day. I also have here a petition containing the signatures of three hundred, within one or two, of the retail shopkeepers of Christchurch. It also was presented to the City Council, praying them not to alter the day, simply because the shopkeepers represented felt it would be a tremendous injustice to themselves, and to the people as well, if they had to close on Saturday. This petition is signed by some large firms as well as small ones. It is true, as has been said by the gentlemen representing Wellington, that Saturday closing would not affect the larger firms very much—in fact, I think it would suit them very much better. Then, why have they not the courage—the manly English courage—to close on the day which they think will suit them and leave other people alone? I thank you very much, gentlemen. I will not take up any more of your time.

HENRY BYLOVE SORENSON examined. (No. 8.)

Mr. Sorenson: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—I think you have had nearly every point touched upon that we from Christchurch could speak on. There is just one, however, that I would like to mention. It seems more especially to affect us in the farming line. In Christchurch, big as we think ourselves and good-looking as we are, we depend on the farmers somehow, and cannot get on without them. They are the backbone—of Christchurch especially. It would be most inconvenient to them to have the closing-day altered to Saturday, because that is their market-day. On a recent Saturday something like eight hundred farmers' carts were counted in the various yards in Christchurch, they having brought in their human freight for the purpose of doing shopping. To the farmers Saturday is a combined half-holiday and the occasion for purchasing the necessaries of life for the next week. Then, there is another aspect of the question. In fixing our holiday it is well, if possible, to have it so as not to hurt other people. In the country—I am speaking more especially of Canterbury—they have certain fixtures for every day of the week except Monday. There are sales at Rakaia, at Leeston, at Kirwee, at Rangiora; so they have every day fixed. We have Wednesday at Addington, and have our own market-day in town on Saturday. I myself have done a farmers' trade for something over thirty years, and claim to be well acquainted with farmers and their habits. My own trade—*i.e.*, that carried on on my premises—is twice as large on Saturday as on any other day of the week. I am an auctioneer, but I am speaking of that particular class of trade which we do every day. The funny thing about this Bill is that the very people whom it exempts do not want to be exempted. You will see at once the butcher will say, "Why should I keep open when all the rest of the town is closed!" The baker will say the same—we have got the bakers individually with us—and the hairdresser will say, "We do not want to be exempt at all. If the town is shut, we want to shut too, otherwise you may compel us to have two holidays." The tobacconist says, "We sell cigars and tobacco. You shut us up, but you allow hotels to keep open, and they sell, so a merchant says, as much as all the shops put together—I mean in tobacco and cigars." We had particulars taken at a number of shops in Christchurch, including grocers, drapers, butchers, and bakers. The takings on the Saturday were equal on an average to those on four days in the week. That is a very big average. These people cannot afford to shut up on a Saturday—that is very evident. The vexing part of the matter is this: the agitation comes largely from the big shops. We do not want to be personal. This is a matter which has caused us in Christchurch more trouble than anything, I should say, since I have been in business. The agitation comes from the big shops, who might very well have the courage of their opinion and shut up on Saturday, as they do in Sydney and Melbourne. There the smaller shops close on Wednesday. I can speak with regard to Sydney and Melbourne, because I was there two or three weeks ago. The large shops shut up on Saturday, and 90 per cent. of the small shops keep open on Saturday and close on Wednesday. I hope, gentlemen, that you will see the force of our arguments. As another gentleman said, we are not here to oppose legislation for our benefit. We are here because we feel persuaded that this Saturday closing would be extremely injurious not only to us but to all our fellow-colonists.