

half-holiday. I was requested to support this principle by Queen Street shopkeepers. Then, there are sixteen shopkeepers in Karangahape Road who are in favour of the Saturday half-holiday. They recognise that there is a difficulty, and it is a vexed question, and they think, therefore, that the Government should not make it compulsory, but that it should be left to the people to decide. They think the present law is not satisfactory, inasmuch as at the conference in February the matter might be decided against the shopkeepers. They agree with me that it would be better to leave it to the people. I have facts and figures to prove that when we had the Saturday half-holiday in Auckland there was no loss of trade, and that the extra takings on Friday made up for the loss of Saturday's trade. Some of the small shopkeepers in Karangahape Road urge that if this were carried out they would be ruined. Notwithstanding all these dismal forebodings, I am convinced that if we could keep open late on the Friday we should do as much business as we now do on the Saturday. Personally, I may say that it is very inconvenient to me to have to be there both on Wednesday and Saturday, as, being a small manufacturer, I have to be, and it is also very inconvenient to a great many persons who are similarly situated. There was no loss in trade when we closed on Saturday in 1895. I was the manager of a small shop at that time, and during the seven weeks we closed on Saturday there was no loss in business. I may say also that the law of 1895 was defective, inasmuch as it gave shopkeepers an opportunity to remain open who employed no labour on that day, so that my neighbour on my right was open when I was closed, and my neighbour opposite also. I say that on the whole the takings would be the same if we closed on Saturday and remained open late on Friday. I made a calculation of the takings during the seven weeks that we closed on Saturday in 1895, and compared them with the takings when we closed on Wednesday in 1896—a corresponding period—and found that the former were £109 18s. 2d., and the latter were £113 17s., so that the difference amounted to only £3 18s. 10d. Had my neighbour been closed no loss would have accrued. It is not really a question of whether we take more money or not on Saturdays, but of when we take it. That is my opinion of the matter. Another paper has been given to me which shows conclusively that in the year 1895, when they closed on the Saturday, the takings were £276 more than in 1894. This is conclusive evidence that the Saturday closing is not injurious to the shopkeeper. I myself think the matter should be left to the people to decide, and I am convinced that Saturday closing would not make the slightest difference to the trade done.

1. *Mr. Witheford.*] I would ask you, Mr. Mackinlay, where were you employed?—In the Karangahape Road.

2. You are in favour of the Saturday half-holiday?—Yes.

3. How many do you represent here?—About fifteen hundred people.

4. How would it affect the tradespeople throughout the district?—I think the small shopkeepers are afraid of any change; but I believe, myself, it would tend to increase their business rather than otherwise, because the people in the country would be more inclined to spend their money in their own district than to come into town.

5. How would it affect the working-man: would it be satisfactory to him?—I do not see why it should not be. A great deal has been said about the working-man going to do his shopping with his wife, but my experience is that it is the wives who do the shopping. The men do not shop. It is the women who do all the shopping, and that is the experience of almost every shopkeeper.

6. It has been stated by delegates to this Committee that 15 or 20 per cent. of the men when they get their wages spend them in the publichouses: do you find that that has been the case in Auckland?—Distinctly not. I should be sorry to think that these men had no self-control. The same thing has been said by the opponents to the Saturday closing about the shop-assistants—that they would go and get drunk. My experience is entirely different. In my young days, when I was in the Old Country, when shops were closed at 8 or 9, we had nowhere to go to but a billiard-room or publichouse. But a better class of young men has developed here owing to better social conditions, and their habits and morals are excellent.

7. Are you, Mr. Dickson, employed in the city?—Yes.

8. For how long have you been employed there?—For eighteen years. I have been connected with the early-closing movement for the last eighteen years. In fact, I have letters on me now on this question written as far back as 1894, which show that we did not wish to interfere with the employer: that we thought it our duty to study his interest. We went round and asked the employers if they would agree to stay open late on Friday instead of Saturday, and we pointed out that if they did so they would not suffer.

9. In your opinion, would it be injurious to the city business if the Saturday half-holiday was adopted?—I am rather inclined to think that it would be in favour of the suburbs, because people would not have time to come down to buy on Friday, and they would buy in the shops in their neighbourhood.

10. *Mr. Bollard.*] What is your opinion about the men—and there are a large number of them—who by the nature of their employment knock off work at 12 or 1 o'clock on Saturday? What is your opinion about their position in connection with the closing of shops on that day?—I may say that we have brought down a petition to-day, to which 3,712 signatures are attached, and it is signed not only by shop-assistants but also by ordinary workers in favour of the Saturday half-holiday. They say that they enjoy the Saturday half-holiday and they do not see why the shop-assistants should not enjoy it also. A man cannot take his wife out with him on the Wednesday afternoon, because her children are at school and she cannot leave the house. Then, as far as the shopping goes, most of the men stay at home and let the wives do the shopping. We do a class of business in which women are not personally interested. It is really a man's business, and yet we do more business with women than we do with men. The men think the women are the best judges and they leave it to their wives. A man does not care much what he wears so long as it pleases the wife.