

43. Do you know whether this closing would be more to the interest of the large shops than of the small ones?—No. I think the small shops would benefit by the Saturday closing—that is, the shops in the suburbs.

44. I mean the small shops in the city?—There are no very small shops in the City of Auckland.

45. Where is the chief trade done?—In Queen Street and in Karangahape Road.

46. How about the country? You have not told us what effect this would have upon the trade done by purchasers coming in from seven or eight miles outside the city?—They come in on Friday. That is market-day in Auckland. On that day the large horse and market sales take place, and as these are of special interest to country people they come in on the Friday, and do their shopping after the sales are over.

47. Do you mean to say that many country people do not come into Auckland on Saturday night?—Yes.

48. When is the bulk of the trade done on Saturday?—On the Saturday morning up to half-past 1 o'clock. We are always busy then. On some mornings we take more from 12 o'clock to half-past 1 than we do from half-past 1 to half-past 7. The people who leave their work at 12 o'clock generally go home and have a rest, and then come out again in the evening.

49. Then, the chief trade is done in the evening?—No; it is done chiefly in the morning. From half-past 7 to 9 in the evening we do a fair trade.

*Mr. Walker*: I have a petition here on the subject, and with the permission of the Committee I will read it. It says,—

[See Appendix A.]

I may say that Mr. Higgins was to have come down here and given evidence with regard to the compulsory closing, but he is ill, and has not been able to come. I was speaking to a gentleman in Auckland on the subject, and asked him what effect he thought it would have on the convenience of the people. I told him it was said that it would cause inconvenience to the people, and he replied that as far as Auckland was concerned it would not cause any inconvenience, although it might in other localities. The right to vote on the subject should be given to the people of the district, making the district so large that it would not result in shops on one side of the street being open when those on the other side are closed.

50. *Mr. Sidey*.] With reference to this taking of a poll of the people of the district, how far from the centre of the town would you extend the district?—I should say that it ought to include Northcote and Devonport on the north shore, and then on the south side it should go as far as Otahuhu and Onehunga, and then there would be no anomaly in the hours of closing in the different localities.

51. Do people not come into the city in the evening on Saturday from further than five miles? No. The people of Otahuhu have desired to have a half-holiday on Saturday.

52. You think a radius of five miles would be sufficient?—I think a radius of five miles from the city would be sufficient as far as Auckland is concerned.

53. You have a petition signed by some sixty shopkeepers?—By sixty-two; and, in addition, there are sixteen in the Karangahape Road who sympathize with the Saturday closing, but think that the matter should be left to the people to decide by a vote.

54. Are they large or small shopkeepers who have signed the petition?—I think there are both large and small. There are some of them of medium size and there are some large.

55. Where are their shops?—They are in Queen Street; and, then, there are sixteen in the Karangahape Road who are in favour of the Saturday closing.

56. How many shops approximately are there in the City of Auckland?—In 1895 I think there were some thirteen or fourteen hundred, and we got 860 signatures in favour of Saturday closing.

57. Did you try to get as many as possible?—No; but these signatures were all got in half an hour.

58. Did you not attempt to get as many signatures as possible?—No.

*Mr. Sidey*: The reason I ask is because sixty-two seems a small number as compared with thirteen hundred.

59. *Mr. Bollard*.] Are you sure there are not some two thousand shops in the city and suburbs?—I do not know, but certainly think not.

60. You were appointed to come here and represent these shopkeepers: was there any meeting at which you were appointed?—No; they simply wrote to me and asked me to represent them.

61. As regards the amount of trade done on the Saturday, do you think that it would be diverted to the suburbs?—In Auckland some of them are afraid it would be diverted from the suburbs, but in other places they think it would be better. The shopkeepers in Queen Street are not afraid of it, but I am told that in the main centres of Wellington it is the other way about.

62. Can you speak as to the feeling of the shopkeepers in Auckland in that respect?—I mean the city shops?—I do not think they will suffer. I may say that Karangahape Road is generally spoken of as a suburb, but it has really become a part of the large centre of trade.

63. Is that the place where the shop was in which you worked when this experiment of Saturday closing was tried in 1895?—Yes; but my shop was not started in 1894, so that I cannot draw a comparison between 1894 and 1895. I may say that when this experiment was tried, it was tried in the very worst month in the year, February, when the bulk of the Christmas and holiday business is over, and we found there is always a great drop in the trade generally at that time of year, and for that reason the experiment was given up; but, personally speaking, in my business it made only a difference of £3 18s. 10d.

64. Was it a large shop?—No; a very small one.