

44. Could you say whether hotels and clubs sell cigars and cigarettes and tobacco on days on which you are closed?—I can say that I know customers who come in on the Thursday after the Wednesday half-holiday, and who have told me that they have bought cigars and cigarettes on the previous day. I know thousands of such cases, and I also know that people have told me that they do not want cigars and cigarettes, because they have bought them at a hotel.

45. I wish to ask you, Mr. Richards, have you any knowledge that hotels have sold cigars and cigarettes on the Saturday afternoon?—I know very well that they do, because I supply some of the hotels wholesale.

46. Does your knowledge come through statements made to you by customers?—Yes, it is so.

47. Have you, Mr. Downes, had any experience which shows you that people have bought cigars and tobacco on the Wednesday afternoon?—Yes.

48. Have any of your customers made a statement to you to that effect?—Yes, they have.

49. Have you, Mr. Batkin, had any statement made to you to that effect?—Oh, yes; I have had many cases of that kind. In fact, I have known some of my customers to come in and say that they bought cigars or cigarettes at the neighbouring hotel on the Wednesday afternoon, when I was closed. I could furnish the name if necessary.

50. Have you had any statement made to you by wholesale traders and merchants as to where they do the greatest amount of their business in selling tobacco?—No.

*Mr. Gilbert:* There are certain special wholesale dealers who do business with hotels in drink and tobacco exclusively,

51. *Mr. Barber.*] As the Bill stands it would only be the tobacconists who would be affected?—Yes.

52. And the hairdressing-room could be kept open on the Saturday afternoon?—Yes.

53. So that the only thing would be that the trade in tobacco would be less?—No. We consider that the whole business would be disturbed.

54. If your takings fell off at all it would only be the takings on the sale of tobacco?—I think it would be on both branches of the trade, because the people would not come into the town.

55. But they would do their shaving elsewhere?—Possibly, or shave themselves.

56. If the clubs and hotels were prevented selling on the Saturday afternoon, would not that help you?—It might.

57. With regard to the question of taking a *plébiscite* of the people, would it not follow that that would lead to the holiday being on different days in different towns?—Taking the vote in that way would have no good effect upon our trade.

58. Do you think it is necessary that the half-holiday should be on the same day generally?—No; I think the present arrangement is the most satisfactory. There may be difficulties under it, but nothing like what there would be if the half-holiday were made compulsory on Saturday.

59. What I want to get at is this: that if the Saturday half-holiday were made general you could alter the other conditions. That is to say, that you could have the paying of wages and the running of cheap trains on another day, and that sort of thing; but if it were left to the vote of the people of a locality you would not have the conveniences that would exist under one general arrangement?—There might be that difficulty no doubt, but I think the other difficulties would be much greater than those which exist under the present arrangement.

60. You say that you represent the hairdressers in Newtown?—Yes; there are three there, and we appear on behalf of them to object to the proposed change.

61. Are you quite sure that you represent the whole of them?—I could not say that positively. I think there was one present at the meeting who approved of the Saturday closing. But they are bad people at rolling up, and, in fact, they do not appear to take an interest in anything.

62. *Mr. Tanner.*] Do you remember that when this class of legislation was first introduced it was specially for the benefit of the shop-assistants—that the half-holiday has always been known as the shop-assistants' half-holiday? Are you aware also that when the Act of 1894 was introduced the employers used just the same arguments against it as you are using against this measure, and declared that they would be ruined and that society would be disturbed?—We only say that we should lose by this proposed arrangement.

63. And now the employers think that the present arrangement would be the best?—I have spoken to a good many of them and they are in favour of it.

64. Do you think that after ten years' experience of the proposed legislation the employers would be as equally satisfied with it as they are with the present arrangement?—They might; but in the meantime the shopkeepers would be ruined.

65. Is yours a cash business?—Yes, entirely so.

66. *Mr. Colvin.*] What objection have you to a *plébiscite*?—Well, many of our customers are not on the roll; and even if you had a special poll there are a large number of moving people on the Saturday who deal with us, and who would have no say in the matter.

67. If the whole of Petone and the Hutt were included, would you have the same objection?—Yes.

68. Why?—Because there are outside people who come in from other places.

69. But those people would be on the roll in their own district, and they could vote there?—There is the difficulty here that a large number of the people would be quite indifferent in the matter, while the Saturday half-holiday people, who are so enthusiastic, would vote that we should not be allowed to open on the Saturday.

70. If people are indifferent it must prove that they prefer the Saturday half-holiday?—I do not hold with that.

71. *Sir W. R. Russell.*] What do you imagine is the feeling generally among the assistants? Would they prefer the Saturday or would they sooner have a compulsory day in the middle of the