

certain provision with regard to overtime, and we shall have to abide by that." They will say that there are provisions for determining the rate to be paid for overtime, and they will say that they will not give anything more than they are bound to do. They are liable to be rounded up at any time by Inspectors, and they will have to keep time-books, and have their offices open to inspection at any time. We think—and law clerks in other parts of the colony have the same feeling—that our employers treat us exceptionally well, better than any other employers in any part of the district. I think the explanation is this: It is perhaps necessary in regard to shops and ordinary offices to have some legislation to protect the employees; but it is totally different in law offices, and we do not think that any such legislation is necessary. Our employers are not like bankers and limited-liability companies. Our employers are private individuals, and are not responsible to any shareholders. They do not have to make big profits except for themselves, and they are not responsible to shareholders for large dividends. What I mean is this: that an employer such as ours can give a clerk a bonus without having to account for it at a meeting of shareholders. Wherefore our relations to our employers are different from those of an ordinary clerk to his employer. The lawyer is also in this position: that not having any one to account to but himself he can employ a man who perhaps would otherwise have no chance of getting anything to do, and I know that has been done on more than one occasion. I have had ten years' experience in lawyers' offices, and I know something of what is done by them sometimes out of pure benevolence. I can tell you of an instance which occurred in Messrs. Skerrett and Wylie's office. There was a man there then who could do no work. He was consumptive, and used to come down about 11 o'clock and do no work but stand at the door to get the sun, and his employers gave him a substantial cheque to enable him to go Home, and other firms in the city subscribed their guinea for the same purpose. I think that instances like that, which are not uncommon, should show the Committee that the relationship between lawyers' clerks and their employers is different from that between ordinary banking and mercantile clerks and their employers. I could give many other instances of the same kind of thing, and I think there is a man here to-day who could give you his experience of the way in which his employer treated him. We feel that our interests are bound up with our employers'. My employer has said to me several times, "I like to treat my clerks as co-operative workers," and if there is a good year's work we get a substantial bonus, and even if it has been a bad year we still get something extra. Therefore we think that, as our employers have a freer hand and are not bound to be questioned by shareholders, and are not responsible for producing dividends, we are not in the position of ordinary clerks. Referring now to the Act itself, I should like to go over some of the ground which it covers. At present our ordinary hours of work are from 9 o'clock till half-past 4 in some offices, and from half-past 9 till 5 in others, and one member of this deputation tells me that his hours are from half-past 9 till half-past 4. It provides that the closing-hour shall be 5 o'clock, and it does not provide when work shall commence. It provides that all employees shall be out of their offices within half an hour after that time, with certain exceptions. We already work to the same hour, and we start at half-past 9 o'clock, while the Act makes no provision as to the hour at which employees shall start. We think, therefore, that we shall get no benefit by that alteration, because we may have to start earlier. With regard to the Saturday half-holiday, we now get a good many more holidays than are provided for by the Act. I understand that Mr. Harrison, the secretary to the Law Society, has made out a return which shows that we got thirty holidays last year, and the previous petition which was presented to the House showed that we got twenty-seven holidays in the year exclusive of Sundays. I think that, with the exception of the school-teachers, we get more holidays than any other profession. Not only do we get the holidays which are provided for by the Act, but when His Worship the Mayor proclaims one we get that too. In fact, we used to get holidays by petitioning for them, and this got so bad that our employers determined that they would stick to the schedule of holidays. I should like also to point out that solicitors often allow their clerks to get away when they request it. Of course, in the case of sickness a clerk can get away and is still paid, and if any individual member of the staff applies for a day off for a particular purpose he is allowed to go without any deduction being made from his pay. Again, the Bill provides for certain overtime being worked. Well, we say that the overtime provided for in the Bill is more than the law clerks work at present. There are some clerks in lawyers' offices who do a certain amount of overtime, but they are chiefly the engrossing clerks. The clerks in a lawyer's office who are desirous of getting through their examination very rarely work overtime. A few weeks ago there was extra work to be done in our office, and I offered to do it; but my employer, thinking I was studying for an examination, suggested that I should give it to a typewriting office outside. Then, the Bill has a provision for the payment of a shilling an hour for working overtime. Well, law clerks earn considerably more than that if they go back to work after the regular hours, and it would be absurd to fix it at this small amount. We say, therefore, that we shall receive no benefit under the Bill in that respect. And then, as far as sanitation is concerned, that is already provided for by the by-laws of the local authority, and there is therefore no need for these provisions. We think that the necessary supervision of ventilation and sanitary arrangements is already sufficiently attended to by the local authorities. Now, having said that we shall not receive any benefit from the proposed Bill, we think that we shall be seriously affected by it to our disadvantage, and for this reason: As I have said before, there is no provision as to the hour at which we are to start work, and our employers may insist upon our going to work before half-past 9 o'clock in the morning, or at half-past 9 o'clock. There is nothing in the Bill to prevent that. As a matter of fact, in some of the financial firms this overtime work must be done before 9 o'clock in the morning. We say that our employers may compel us to do that. We do not think that they would do so, but we say that they might do it, and we think it would be a bad thing for us. We say also that they might curtail privileges which we at present enjoy, and the number of holidays which are now given to us, and that they would not give us any more holidays than they would have to do compulsorily. That means that