

*Mr. Robert Orr*: I am employed by Messrs. Travers, Russell, and Campbell. I have been a law clerk for thirty-four years, and I can say that this Bill, as far as we are concerned, is quite uncalled-for. We are well paid, and next to schoolmasters have the shortest hours and most holidays, and if we go back to work overtime we are well paid for that. There is one clause in this Bill which would affect me personally, to which I wish to call attention, and which I object to. I live in the country, and the clients of the office often come to me at my residence and ask me to prepare documents for them. At present I can prepare them in the office hours, and take them out to be signed by the parties concerned, but under this proposed Act I should not be able to do that. I go to my office at half-past 9 o'clock, and I leave at half-past 4. My opinion is that it is a mistake to include solicitors' clerks in the provisions of this Bill. They are totally different from the usual clerks in mercantile houses. They have to think more for their employers than those in a merchant's office. I think that to put any statutory restrictions between law clerks and their employers would tend to cause friction between them, and I therefore hope that the Committee will exempt us from the provisions of the Bill.

*Mr. Hardy*: Perhaps some of the members of the deputation are not aware of the intention of the Bill. I understand that the evidence shows that the law clerks are doing very well, and if this Bill were brought into operation would there not be a bit of a cut-up, so that some of the outside people might like to come in, which the bulk of the people cannot do now?

*Mr. Orr*: You appear to think that you can train your law clerks mechanically, and that they only work as mechanics. I assure you it requires something more. Take my own instance: I require to have experience and a knowledge of the law to enable me to get up cases for my employer.

88. *Mr. Hardy*.] You do not think it would be an advantage to have a greater number of law clerks trained?—I hold that there would not be so many fit to do the work if the provisions of this Bill were given effect to.

89. We have had evidence—not the evidence given to-day—which would tend to show that it might be necessary to shorten the hours of employees?—If you do so with regard to law clerks it will be bad for them. Every one can now enter into the business with the idea of getting into the profession, and you should go through the experience of a law office before you did that.

90. I was rather taken with the evidence given to-day, and had no idea that there were any employees doing so well?—We think we are doing well, and we see no reason why you should interfere. If there is an evil, then by all means remedy it; but why should you interfere with us when you are not going to do us any good?

*Mr. Linklater*: The profession is now open to any one who can pass the necessary examinations without going into a lawyer's office at all, so that the legal profession is one of the most open in the colony at the present time. No doubt there are some lawyers who are not doing so well as others. The firm by which I am employed is an old-established one, with a large number of clients; but probably some of the younger men in the city, and also many in the up-country townships, are not making a large income. There are about seventy solicitors in this city, and some of them cannot be doing as well as others.

*Mr. McGrath*: I guarantee that there are more than thirty solicitors in Wellington who are not doing as well as a member of Parliament.

*Mr. Sadey*: There was only one expression used by the first speaker which I did not quite understand. He said that the Bill would provide for retaliation by the employer—

*Mr. Wedde*: What I said was that there were provisions in the Bill which would be injurious to us, and that they might lead to retaliation on the part of the employer.

91. *Mr. Wood*.] If an Act of Parliament is brought down for the protection of the people, should it be made applicable to only a section of the community or to the whole of it?—It should be for the class who are oppressed.

92. Then, you would have an Act for the bank clerks and those in other businesses and leave the law clerks alone?—I have endeavoured to show that the relations between a law clerk and his employer are different to those between ordinary clerks in mercantile houses and banks and insurance offices and their employers.

93. *Mr. Ell*.] You, Mr. Linklater, said that if this Bill passed it might lead to retaliation on the part of the employers?—I said that it might cause friction between us and our employers, which does not at the present time exist.

94. There is no provision for overtime?—You cannot in solicitors' offices do without it. There are no solicitors in this city who have a large practice who have not many clients in the country districts. When these clients come into town to do their legal work they do not want to stay longer than they can help, so that occasionally we have to get documents ready for execution by the next day, and that, of course, requires the engrossing work to be done in the evening. And so it is with regard to Supreme Court and Court of Appeal work. We may have half a dozen cases to get ready for one sitting, and a lot of the work must of necessity be done after the usual hours.

95. Are you aware that you have been working under this law since 1894, and that nearly all the provisions in the present Bill have been in operation since then?—I am not aware of it, and, if so, they have not been enforced.

96. And that every provision contained in this Bill could have been enforced during the last nine years?

*Mr. Orr*: I was not aware of that. If it is so, what is the necessity for introducing this Bill? I should like to know in what Acts those provisions are to be found.

*Mr. Ell*: You will find them in the Acts which are enumerated in the schedule to this Bill—that is to say, in the Acts of 1894, 1895, and 1896.

97. *Mr. Tanmer*.] How are your hours of work fixed, Mr. Orr?—By the employers.

98. Is there anything to prevent their being increased?—No.

99. You have no legal enactment relating to your hours of work, and the employers can increase or decrease them as they think fit?

*Mr. Wedde*: Yes; and if this Bill is passed it will be the same thing.