

thing that strikes me is that if the half-holiday is not universal, or extending over large areas, cheap fares and frequent running of steamers and trains would not exist as they should do in holiday time. If merchants' offices, Government offices, shops, and places of business generally were closed on the one day, steamers and trains would be running, and all classes of the community would enjoy their holiday. At present factory-hands and shop-hands in many places cannot join in sports on the same day. A man in a factory may very likely have a girl employed in a shop. He cannot meet her or take her out, because their half-holidays are not on the same day. It has been said that it would answer as well if the factory half-holiday were made on the Wednesday instead of Saturday, but that is not so, because children are at school on Wednesday, and are not on Saturday. It would be necessary to alter the whole system of school attendance to make them equal, so that father, mother, and children could take holiday together.

Another point which has been attempted to be made with regard to the Saturday half-holiday is that so many people would not come into town, and that there would be a loss of custom by the town shops. I do not see the force of that argument. I do not see why people should not spend their money in the place in which they make it. What should we in Wellington say if we had to go to Sydney for what we wanted? If the money were spent in the place in which it is made a very large share of the tempting goods which the large shops in town now display would find their way into the up-country towns, and the profits would be spread amongst the up-country storekeepers.

There are six ways in which this half-holiday could be arranged: (a) By the local authority, as at present; (b) by local authorities, with extended time, say, for three years instead of one year; (c) by the local authorities, with a far wider area; (d) by the shopkeepers themselves; (e) by the shopkeepers and shop-assistants combined; and (f) by the electoral roll for boroughs and provinces.

Turning now to section 5, which deals with the accommodation to be provided for female shop-assistants, subsection (a) says, "Reasonable and proper sitting-accommodation shall at all times be provided for them in the shop." I should like to have, after the word "accommodation," the words "to the satisfaction of the Inspector" inserted. The law is absolutely evaded now. The girls never sit down. There is some sort of rule in shops which makes it somewhat unprofessional for a girl to sit down during business hours. We suggest that, instead of there being chairs provided behind the counters for the accommodation of girls, there should be a sort of sliding seat provided which could be pushed in and out under the counters as it was required. Only last week I was told, "Why, there are chairs outside the counter on which the girls could sit down if the chairs are not occupied by customers." We know what would happen to a girl who did that. The latest report from the Chief Inspector in New South Wales contains the following statement: "The seats may be placed ready for use, but the girls and women for whom they have been provided are not permitted to use them. In some cases that autocrat of the counter, the shop-walker, discourages the use of the seat on the ground that to see employees sitting down is unbusiness-like." That is just what we find here, and I think if the words "to the satisfaction of the Inspector" were inserted it would obviate any difficulty in carrying out the law.

Returning to section 7 and the provision for a Saturday half-holiday, I should like to say that there is no good giving a Saturday half-holiday unless there is a provision for closing at a certain hour on the ordinary days. There have been many cases known where shop-assistants have been called upon to work three and four hours extra on ordinary days in order to make up for the half-holiday, so that unless there is a limit to the working-hours on ordinary days there is no good giving a Saturday half-holiday.

Referring to section 6, as to the payment of wages, there are certain ages fixed at which a certain amount of wages shall be paid; but I have to bring under the notice of the Committee that at the present time I have no means whatever of getting a record of the ages of shop-assistants, or even of the number of shop-assistants there are in the colony. It would be well if there were a provision that there should be a record kept of the number of assistants employed, their wages, and the ages of those who range from fourteen to twenty years of age. Under the Factories Act they keep a record of the number of young persons of different ages employed, but there is no such provision with regard to shops. I would suggest that a record should be kept such as is provided for in section 17 of "The Factories Act, 1901," which provides for the classification and record of workers.

In regard to section 8 of the Bill, relating to excepted shops, it should be made plain whether "hairdresser" also includes "tobacconist." There is more trouble over these mixed businesses than any other. The interests of hairdressers and tobacconists are not identical. Hairdressers are all against the Saturday half-holiday, both employers and employees. Hairdressers know, and so do their assistants, that men must be shaved or have their hair cut on Saturday afternoon and evening, but tobacconists are like any other trade in respect to business. I repeat that it should be made plain whether "hairdresser" includes "tobacconist," because the two trades are so different. As a rule, when the two trades are carried on in the same premises, the tobacconist's shop is in front, and it would not be very difficult for them to turn the key in the shop-door of the hairdresser's part of the business on the half-holiday, leaving the door to the tobacconist's shop open, and *vice versa*.

Of course, this section 8 is a very debatable section. The matter of exemptions is difficult to arrange. I would ask the Committee to consider whether it might not be well to provide that exempted shops should have some other fixed day for closing, and that provision to that effect should be put in subsection (2) of this section. What I mean is this: that if it is decided to have a general half-holiday on Saturday, except in the case of exempted shops, those exempted shops at present may choose Monday, or Tuesday, or Wednesday, or Thursday, or Friday to close, or not to close at all, but give assistants each some odd half-day. Our Inspectors have to run all over the place to try and find out who are keeping the proper half-holiday, and they are attempted to be