

1903.
NEW ZEALAND.

LABOUR BILLS COMMITTEE:
(REPORT OF THE) ON THE SHOPS AND OFFICES BILL; TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF
EVIDENCE THEREON.

(MR. J. F. ARNOLD, CHAIRMAN.)

Report brought up on 6th November, and ordered to be printed.

ORDERS OF REFERENCE.

Extracts from the Journals of the House of Representatives.

THURSDAY, THE 2ND DAY OF JULY, 1903.

Ordered, "That Standing Order No. 211 be suspended, and that a Committee consisting of twenty-one members be appointed, to whom shall be referred the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Amendment Bill and certain other Bills more particularly referring to labour; five to be a quorum: the Committee to consist of Mr. Aitken, Mr. Alison, Mr. Arnold, Mr. Barber, Mr. Bedford, Mr. Bollard, Mr. Colvin, Mr. Davey, Mr. Ell, Mr. Fisher, Mr. Hardy, Mr. Kirkbride, Mr. Laursen, Mr. Millar, Sir W. R. Russell, Mr. Sidey, Mr. Tanner, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Withford, Mr. Wood, and the mover."—(Rt. Hon. R. J. SEDDON.)

TUESDAY, THE 21ST DAY OF JULY, 1903.

Ordered, "That the Shops and Offices Bill be referred to the Labour Bills Committee."—(Rt. Hon. R. J. SEDDON.)

REPORT.

SHOPS AND OFFICES BILL.

THE Labour Bills Committee, to which was referred the Shops and Offices Bill, has directed me to report that it has duly considered the said Bill and taken evidence thereon, and recommends that the same be allowed to proceed as amended, the amendments being shown in a copy annexed hereto, together with a copy of the minutes of evidence.

J. F. ARNOLD, Chairman.

Friday, the 6th day of November, 1903.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

FRIDAY, 31ST JULY, 1903.

Two deputations, representing respectively Wellington and Christchurch retailers, were introduced.

The Chairman : We understand, gentlemen, that you desire to give evidence in connection with the Shops and Offices Bill. We presume that all of you do not wish to speak, and that you have your spokesman. If anything is left unsaid by the person whom you have requested to speak on your behalf, we will be glad if the others will fill up the gap. We have other deputations waiting, and wish to get through as quickly as possible for the convenience of those who are here; and we hope you will help us in that direction. We shall be very pleased to now hear what you have to say in connection with any clauses of this Bill.

WILLIAM ALLAN examined. (No. 1.)

Mr. Allan : Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—We have come here to give evidence on the Shops and Offices Bill. We do not wish to traverse each clause of the Bill, but there are one or two clauses which very materially affect us, and which we would like to speak about. The chief one is that providing for the Saturday half-holiday. As you are aware, the Saturday half-holiday is an institution in some phases of trade which works admirably; but for the retail trade, which all of us here represent, the Saturday half-holiday is quite unsuitable. Saturday shopping is an institution that dates back, I suppose, as far as shop-keeping. What is asked for now in this Bill is very much of a revolutionary character. Some years ago the Legislature provided for an optional half-holiday—*i.e.*, either on Saturday or any other day of the week which the local authorities might fix. It is apparent to every one that that measure has been faithfully carried out. The shopkeepers have most loyally endeavoured to carry out the law in the matter of the weekly half-holiday. We are now enjoying that half-holiday, and I do not think there is any retailer, employer or otherwise, who would wish to see that half-holiday done away with. There were inconveniences in connection with it to begin with, but we have got over them. Now, we feel very much disturbed over this proposed change to make Saturday the day for the half-holiday. At the present time those who wish to have Saturday can have it; it is optional, so there is no hardship imposed upon those who would like to close on Saturday afternoon. But as the law now stands if the local bodies make it Saturday we have no option to choose another day; and according to this Bill we should be simply bound down to a universal half-holiday on Saturday afternoon. Now, from the point of view of trade that would be disastrous. I am not exaggerating when I say that most traders who do a middle-class and working-class trade will tell you—and they will bear out the statement by evidence from their books—that on a Saturday their takings amount to those of any other two or three days in the week. To change that, it must be apparent to every one, would be very dangerous, to say the least of it, and in some localities it would be disastrous. No doubt members of the House will ask, “Where does the assistant come in?” It is quite easily understood that an assistant would like all the privileges he could get, and no doubt it would be very nice to have Saturday afternoon and Sunday linked together as holiday-time. But there are a great many other privileges which would be very enjoyable but which it would be disastrous to trade to give to the assistants. You have, no doubt, seen by the papers that the Trades and Labour Council appear to support the Saturday half-holiday, but I may tell you that the Trades and Labour Council are not the working-men. They do not represent the wage-earners in a general way. It is quite the common thing—you will find that the working-people will tell you so—for the working-man to go home on Saturday at midday: He cleans up for the week, and goes out with his wife on Saturday afternoon and evening to do the shopping. He will tell you that he does not see how he and his wife could do their shopping at all if the privilege of doing it on Saturday were denied them. You might say to him, “Oh, but we will give you Friday night as the late night in the week.” Suppose you do, how then? The working-man gets home at 6 o'clock in the evening. He has his tea, changes himself, or otherwise, and reads the paper. Why, the evening is then gone. You take away from him the only opportunity he has in the week for doing his shopping. Of course, there is a large section of the community to whom it does not matter on what day in the week they do their shopping; they can do it on any day. But the working-man, whose business to a very large extent we cater for, could not possibly do his shopping on any other afternoon but Saturday. You may say that he *must* do it, and he might; but that would lead to developments that might not be desirable. To show the importance of the matter even to the limited suburban trade, we have returns here from the Manawatu Railway Company and from the Government railways which go to show the very large number of people who come into Wellington ostensibly to do shopping on Saturday. From the Lower Hutt and intermediate stations there came into Wellington on Saturday the 18th of this month 1,098 people, and on Saturday the 25th of this month, 895. So you see there is a large railway traffic on that day. People teem into town to do their shopping. If the Saturday half-holiday were to become law it would simply mean that those people would be denied the privilege of shopping on Saturday afternoon, and consequently a very large amount of business would be lost to us. On the Manawatu Railway an average of two hundred people for the last twenty-five Saturdays travelled from Paikakariki and intermediate stations to Wellington.

1. *Mr. Taylor.*] Have you the particulars of the traffic on the other days?—No. The next clause that I wish to refer to is the overtime clause. We are not exactly exercised over this clause, but I think it is one the assistants ought to look into. As employers we do not object to pay overtime. We are quite prepared to do so. But I would point out to members of this Committee that it would mean a very considerable curtailment of privileges to the assistants. At the present time, I have no doubt, it would pay many employers very much better to pay overtime than grant those privileges. There are quite a number of establishments where the proprietors not only pay their assistants full salaries every week, for holidays and all, but also pay for sick-time. It is quite a common thing to find assistants laid up for a week, a fortnight, or three weeks, as the case may be, but the pay is never stopped. If we are to pay overtime we should scarcely continue to do that. There are other houses which give bonuses to their assistants. Well, it would be quite an easy matter to balance the overtime on the bonus account. You see it would simply be a matter of adjustment; and for that reason, although we feel that it would be a pity to destroy the good-fellowship that now exists between assistants and employers in the shopkeeping trade, it would be a mistake for the Legislature to make this payment for overtime law. I do not think there is anything else I wish to say. I do not wish to detain the Committee unduly long; but there are one or two points that, perhaps, one or two other of the gentlemen here would like to refer to.

FINLAY McLEOD examined. (No. 2.)

Mr. McLeod: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—My remarks will have reference chiefly to sections 7 and 14 of the Bill. In opposing those clauses I may say that we are not only re-echoing the overwhelming opinions of the great majority of the traders of this city, but we are supported by resolutions carried at public meetings in pretty well every centre. Naturally enough, there are two sides to this question—there are generally two sides to a question. Members of the Committee will recollect that recently a petition was presented on behalf of a trader—Mr. Kirkcaldie, of this city. That petition calls for a little attention at my hands. No doubt you are aware that Mr. Kirkcaldie caters for a particular class of trade. He strains every nerve to collect around him the wealthy section of the community, and the wealthy section of the community, as you are also no doubt aware, have leisure time. The ladies have a sufficient supply of servants, lady-helps, and other assistants, so they can select either the morning or the afternoon of any day in the week on which to do their shopping. On Saturday their programme usually is to attend the races, play croquet, tennis, and so forth; therefore with them Saturday is not recognised as the day for shopping. Hence Mr. Kirkcaldie's desire to have Saturday proclaimed as the day for the half-holiday. He does little or no business on that day, and, naturally enough, he is anxious that that day should be set aside as the half-holiday day. Now, gentlemen, we will look at the other side of the question, and regard it from the workers' standpoint. When I say "worker" I know that every man or woman who from necessity, desire, or inclination contributes in the slightest degree to the production of the commodities that are for the benefit of the human race is a worker. But take a typical case—take the house of a typical worker—take that of an artisan. What is the programme laid out for him for five days in the week? He has his breakfast, and leaves home for work first thing in the morning. Immediately he has gone his wife attends to the domestic duties—prepares the children for school, and so on. Immediately after they have gone the domestic duties require attention, and keep her going till dinner-time. Then her husband returns for dinner. Immediately after he has gone to work again she requires to prepare for the children returning from school at half-past 3, and her husband's return at 5 o'clock. That is her day for five days in the week. That will be borne out by any member of the Committee who looks into the matter. It is the well-regulated home that should require the attention of legislators. Saturday comes round; the husband returns from work soon after 12 o'clock with his wages—hard-earned wages; and Saturday afternoon is the only time that the husband and the wife have at their disposal to devote to procuring their requirements for the following week or fortnight, as the case may be. What does this Bill propose? It proposes to take this opportunity away from the worker; and what opportunity are you going to give him in return? You ask him to shop on Friday night—having a late night for that purpose—in preference to Saturday afternoon. Surely there is no advancement in that. I maintain that this cannot be regarded as a democratic move at all. Democracy has gone under this provision. That part of the law which allowed the local bodies formerly to regulate the matter is done away with. I myself have always claimed to be a bit of a democrat, and I have cherished that text which says, "Government of the people for the people by the people." But, sir, if this Bill becomes law I shall require to take down that text, and put this one up, "Government of the governed by Parliament for Ministers," because this Bill cannot be regarded as a democratic measure at all. Now, I wish to refer to another aspect of the question. How will this Bill affect the farming interests—how will it affect the country townships? As one who has come from Otago I can say this: I have known a good deal of the requirements of the different townships there, and from Invercargill right up to Oamaru you will find that Saturday is the day when the bulk of the shopping is done. There is more business done in Invercargill on Saturday than there is on any other four days of the week. Now, you propose to destroy that, and compel the farmer or his wife to come in on some other day to obtain their requirements. You will observe that this is not to be a universal half-holiday; the Bill does not compel, for instance, an auctioneer to close on the Saturday. He will still be able to carry on his business on a Saturday afternoon, and the farmers will be compelled to attend horse-sales on Saturday in their own interests, while the wives will have to select some other day on which to do their shopping, for the shops will be shut then. Then, look at section 14. There is something in the democratic line about this clause, because it provides for a vote of the traders, and a three-fifths majority. But, gentlemen, when you look at the interpretation of the term "occupier" you see that it is perfectly

useless. The clause might as well be cut out of the Bill altogether. It has no force—no influence whatever—in view of the definition of the term “occupier.” What, then, will be the result? If you force us to recognise Saturday as the day for the half-holiday it will mean that a great deal of the business now done on Saturday afternoon will be distributed over the other days in the week. That we admit; but it will tend to a great deal of late shopping on other nights. That will bring us back to the state we were in fifteen or twenty years ago when we had universal late shopping. Surely that is not desirable. The shopkeepers are not anxious to go back to that state of things. Would it not be far better to give opportunities to shopkeepers and their assistants to attend lectures and make use of other educational facilities placed at their disposal at a heavy expense to the country? Why should we not have the opportunity, for instance, of going to the House of Representatives and viewing the flower of the intelligence of this colony assembled there? Why should we not have the opportunity of listening to the flow of eloquence that goes on and on, like the river, but which, unfortunately, troubles us a great deal? However, gentlemen, I hope that you will consider the requirements of the workers in this case, and that legislation will not be brought in hurriedly that will place the workers of the colony at a disadvantage. As I have said before, Mr. Kirkcaldie represents his own class of customers; we represent the workers. It is not, I apprehend, your desire to legislate for the shopkeeper, or even for the assistant; but it is your desire to legislate for the great majority of the people. If that is your desire, gentlemen, I maintain that you cannot possibly alter this particular day without doing an injustice to the great majority of the people whom we are here to represent. That is all I have to say, gentlemen.

JAMES GODBER examined. (No. 3.)

Mr. Godber: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—Your time is short. The gentlemen who have preceded me have well explained the views of the deputation. I have been requested to attend this conference on behalf of the small traders. The small traders, sir, look with alarm at the proposal contained in the Bill to make the Saturday half-holiday compulsory. I care not for the large people. They can regulate their trade to suit its requirements. But with the struggling small traders, if you take their Saturday business away from them, it, in nine cases out of ten, means ruin. I say that advisedly. Mr. McLeod has spoken of the facilities that the working-men require in order to obtain their commodities after their work is over; and the small traders are unanimous in this city—and I believe they are the same in other cities—in their conviction that if you compel them to close on Saturday afternoon instead of another afternoon in the middle of the week their trade will go down so low that they will not be able to continue business. The great majority of the people in this city do not wish the day to be altered. For years now Wednesday has been our closing-day, and it has answered admirably. Some time ago, when this was a burning question in the city, petitions were got up both for and against the Wednesday half-holiday. I have here in my hand a petition that contains nearly twenty thousand signatures in favour of the Wednesday half-holiday. That petition was submitted to the City Council on that occasion.

2. *Mr. Aitken*.] Wednesday in preference to Saturday?—Yes. There was a counter-petition in opposition to this, but the names in this petition are four to one to those contained in the other; and if necessary we could duplicate that, and so increase the numbers very largely.

3. *Mr. Alison*.] When was the petition got up?—About four or five years ago. I am informed that the names in the petition in favour of Wednesday are nearly four to one in the other. I could not get the numbers at the hurried notice, but the secretary of the committee which got the petition up is here, and will indorse what I say—that for every signature in favour of Saturday there were about four in favour of Wednesday. That is correct, is it not, Mr. Bush?

Mr. Bush: Yes.

Mr. Godber: Then, sir, Wednesday is a success, and, such being the case, why interfere with it? Why should we disorganize trade? Why should we put burdens upon people that they cannot bear? If Saturday is a favourable afternoon for the holiday, how is it that it is not freely accepted through the whole of the colony? I do not know of one—if there is one it is only one—part of the colony that observes the Saturday half-holiday. I am not going to say anything about Christchurch, as representatives from there are here now and can speak for themselves; but I will mention Napier, which was compulsory. There, and at other places, though not compulsory, it has been tried—in a perfunctory manner truly—but it has not been a success. If you go further and go over to the Australian Colonies, you will find that Wednesday is the day for the half-holiday in Sydney, and it answers admirably. I am informed by our present Town Clerk, who was acting in that capacity in Sydney, that the Wednesday half-holiday there is a great success, and they would not dream of altering it for anything like a Saturday half-holiday. Melbourne is in the same position. I think, without further taking up the time of the Committee, that the trend of this Bill—to make the Saturday half-holiday compulsory—would be ruinous, and would disorganize trade in the city.

THOMAS WARDELL examined. (No. 4.)

Mr. Wardell: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—There is just one point that I would wish to draw the Committee's attention to. The question of overtime (clause 3) has been touched upon by Mr. Allan. I think we have seen the result of a meeting recently held in Wellington: that the assistants themselves are very much afraid that if this is made law it will be detrimental to their interests. I would also draw attention to subsection (2), where it is proposed to make it necessary in order to work overtime to get a permit from the Factory Inspector. Unless I am greatly mistaken this is a new proposal. At present we have to get permission from the Factory Inspector for youths under eighteen to work late hours. But we are not under the same necessity to get

permits to work adult assistants. Surely the adult assistants are sufficiently able to take care of themselves in this respect. It will lead to needless friction if we have to run to the Inspector every time we wish to work a few hours late. It is almost absolutely impossible to tell beforehand when we shall require to work late hours. We may start the day with the best intentions to get through our work, but in a retail business circumstances will arise under which the ordinary work cannot be overtaken before closing-time, and if we were compelled to catch the Inspector before 5 o'clock it would mean that it might be quite impossible for us to work our men late on a particular evening although necessary. Then, I would draw attention to the number of hours specified. Fifty-two hours a week are suggested as the number we should work our assistants. That will interfere with the existing awards of the Arbitration Court. In the grocery trade the hours are fixed at fifty-three universally throughout the colony. If you fix them at fifty-two it means that we shall have to close up sharp at 9 o'clock on the late night. That is a further argument against altering the late night from Saturday to Friday. If you close us up at 9 on Friday night, I think it will be seen from what Mr. McLeod has said that it gives very little time indeed for people who come from a distance to do their shopping before closing-time. There is really nothing else that I would care to draw attention to, except to point out that Mr. Godber has put the point of the experience of other centres almost too mildly. He instanced Napier. It will be within the recollection of most people that the Napier shopkeepers were in a very bad way indeed when the closing-day was fixed for Saturday. I am not sure if it was a legal step which they took to get out of it. The Saturday half-holiday has been tried in Auckland and Christchurch. I think the Christchurch members here will say that I am not overstating the case when I say that in Christchurch it was given a very fair trial for a month or two months; but the shopkeepers in the centre of the city found it a regular pandemonium on Saturday morning to attempt to do the business there was to be done. Saturday closing has also been tried in Dunedin—voluntarily, I admit, but with every intention of giving it a fair trial. I hope that this Committee will see its way to send the Bill back in an altered form, and not impose this Saturday half-holiday upon us.

GEORGE WINDER examined. (No. 5.)

Mr. Winder: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—I do a large carpenters'-tool trade on Saturday afternoon, and I want to show you the great injustice you would be doing to mechanics and the small shopkeepers by passing this Bill. I may say that I sell double as much on Saturday as on any other day of the week—mostly from 2 o'clock—in carpenters' tools and other sales, to small people in the suburbs. These people come in from the Hutt, Petone, Island Bay, &c., on Saturday. In the first place, they get a very cheap fare on the Government railways on Saturday, which they do not get on any other day. In the second place, take the Hutt: Some tradesmen's work may be two or three miles from the station, and they have to walk to the station, and reach town by the train in the afternoon. If they had to shop on Friday night they could not possibly get a train until 7 o'clock, and then maybe they would have had to walk for an hour previously to catch that train. When they got in to do their business they would not have more than an hour, and their shopping would have to be done by gaslight. That would be one great injustice to mechanics. I do believe that one portion of the public must certainly wait upon another portion. If this Bill is carried I would like it to go further and include hotel servants and restaurant servants, and so give everybody a complete holiday. I think that should be done if the Bill is carried at all. On Friday night, if that is the night fixed for the shops to keep open, of course the assistants will have to work up to 10. I suppose they cannot work until 11. Then, the proprietors of the foundries and other machinery places will, of course, have to pay their hands on Friday instead of on Saturday morning; and if the hands are not Prohibitionists they may take a little too much on Friday night, and not be able to turn up to their work on the Saturday morning. As I said, the suburban trade comes on the Saturday, as well as that of the poorer class of people. I do not do the aristocratic trade at all, because I am at the poorer end of the town, near Te Aro. I have lately established myself on Lambton Quay, so I am getting up a bit. There is a trader beside me here—Mr. Bush—a draper. He has tried to find out what proportion of his total trade has been done on Saturday for the last seven years, and he has found that he does 48½ per cent. of his trade on the Saturday afternoon. I think he is in just the same position as myself. There is only one other remark I wish to make, for the other speakers, I think, have put the matter before you very plainly. I am a City Councillor here. So is Mr. Barber. I think we represent the smaller class of people in Wellington, and we are always looked upon as the supporters of the Wednesday afternoon half-holiday as against Saturday. In Wellington we are a very democratic people, and have democratic legislation. We have not the ward system in our city; and Mr. Barber and myself were placed at the top of the poll at the last municipal election. I think that is a sufficient argument that the people are very well satisfied with the present state of affairs.

JOHN GRAHAM examined. (No. 6.)

Mr. Graham: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—I represent the Chamber of Commerce at Masterton, and consequently I can speak of how this Bill will affect the country districts. I may mention that the Chamber of Commerce in Masterton is differently constituted from a city Chamber, because there are a good many farmers in it who take an interest in the commercial affairs of the place; consequently what I have got to voice is the feelings of the farmers as well as of the trading community. Other gentlemen have pointed out to you how inimical this Bill would be to the interests of the shopkeepers. I would like to corroborate that. I put the proportion of the trade done on Saturday at 50 per cent. more than the next best day of the week. This gentleman puts it at 48½ per cent.; at all events, that is pretty near the mark. One point I should like to impress upon you is how prejudicial closing on Saturday would be to the farming interest in a country dis-

trict. A very large proportion of the farmers do their business on Saturday, and it would be very inconvenient to them if the shops were closed on Saturday. You may say they could come in on another day. That is quite true; but the point that I would wish to call your attention to is the effect of Saturday closing on the working-class of Masterton, and no doubt the same applies to other country towns. I have made careful inquiries, and find that on an average a hundred and fifty working-men work outside of the town during the week. It has been said, "Well, let them be paid on the Friday." Take these men, working, on an average, from seven to ten miles outside of the town, and suppose they are paid on the Friday. They come into the places in the town where the employers are and receive their cheques, and, supposing the shops are open, they do their business. Are these men to go off to work the half-day on Saturday forenoon? It would be most prejudicial to them; in fact, it would be thoroughly impracticable in a country district, and I trust you will see the force of what I say. These men would require to come in to get their cheques, and supposing the time they would have were limited to 9 o'clock on Friday night, they could not possibly do their business. You could not expect working-men to go back seven and eight miles to sawmills, road-work, fencing, and all that kind of thing and do their half-day on Saturday and return again on Saturday afternoon to town, where their family reside. Then, there are about sixty men who live in the town and work in the country. I refer now to married men. They come in on the Saturday half-holiday, as it is termed now, get their wages, do their business, and spend the Sunday with their family, and go back to work on Monday morning. They could not do that if the half-holiday for shops was on Saturday. Mr. Daniells, the largest employer of labour in Masterton, made an honest effort to have Saturday. He had the conviction that the Saturday half-holiday would work. He tried it for twelve months, and it was a complete failure, and he was obliged to go back to the old system.

4. *Mr. Taylor.*] What is his business?—He is a large ironmonger, timber-merchant, builder, and sawmiller, and has an average of fifty men working for him. That, I think, is a matter for your very grave consideration. As I said before, it would be a very great hardship on the working-men if Saturday were fixed for the half-holiday. We are a democratic people, and I trust you will consider their interest apart from those we represent. Then, there is another matter: I refer to overtime. I think the gentlemen here present will corroborate my statement when I say that it is general in most shops to give the men a holiday every year without deducting anything from their wages. No wages are deducted for illness. We have nineteen employed altogether at our place. I asked them the other day, "Which would you rather have?" They answered, "Certainly the system we are under now." I then asked, "Which would be the best?" They replied, "The present system by far and away." Of course, if we pay overtime we shall not pay them for casual illness, and we shall not pay for holidays. The shopkeepers will thereby save a considerable amount a year, so that it is from no selfish motive that they oppose the payment of overtime. It in no way affects us. We oppose it in the interests of our employees—in the positive interests of our employees, as well as on the ground of disadvantage to others. There is one other point that I wish to refer to. On page 7 of the Bill it says, "No requisition shall be acted upon by the Minister unless the City or Borough Council has certified that the signatures to the requisition represent the occupiers of not less than three-fifths of all the shops within the borough." You see, gentlemen, that this puts it into the hands of those who employ no labour at all to fix the day. We respectfully suggest that if the Bill is passed it should read, "Occupiers of shops who employ three-fifths of the employees." You see the point. A man who has no employees at all can go in for any day, and those who employ a number of men are entirely at the mercy of those who have no employees.

The Chairman (to Mr. Allan): Have you anything that you would like to add to what has been said, Mr. Allan?

Mr. Allan: No, sir, I have nothing to add. I have only to thank the Committee for the patient hearing they have given to us. We hope that they will pay attention to the suggestions made by the members of this deputation. We feel certain that we are not asking for anything the granting of which would be a hardship to any one.

WILLIAM CONGREVE examined. (No. 7.)

Mr. Congreve: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—I have the honour to represent the large majority of the retail shopkeepers of Christchurch, and also the large majority of the residents of Christchurch, *re* this Saturday half-holiday. The Wellington deputation have gone so fully into this matter that I feel I should not be justified in wasting one moment of your time. The deputation from Christchurch, I think, fully indorse all that has been said by the gentlemen who have just spoken, so that without taking up your time further I would just like to read the reasons why we feel that the fixing of the day for the half-holiday should be left to the discretion of the people who at present have the electing of the day for the half-holiday. If it cannot be left to the discretion of these people, then by all means have a *plébiscite* of the people in each district taken, and let the people in the country themselves say what they will have. Do not let Parliament fix a day and say to the shopkeepers, "We will ruin one-half of you." That is what it really means. These are our reasons: "(1.) That Wednesday is a more suitable and convenient day for the half-holiday than Saturday, both for buyers and sellers; that it constitutes an agreeable break in the middle of the week, which is greatly appreciated by all tradesmen and their assistants; that Saturday is the one day in the week that could not be made a universal closing-day; (2.) That it is a great convenience to country people who desire to do business in town to be able to do their shopping on a Saturday; that there is more retail trade done in Christchurch on Saturday than on any other three days in the week combined. (3.) That a large percentage of this trade would be lost or diverted in another direction if a day other than Saturday were chosen for the market-day. (4.) That artisans, labourers, and factory-hands have their half-holiday on Saturday—hence if the retailers were closed

a very large section of the public would have no opportunity of making their purchases in the day-time, but would have to resort to late shopping; that with ever-increasing rates, taxes, and rent the tradespeople can ill afford to suffer any pecuniary loss. (5.) That to change to Saturday would prejudicially affect the shop-assistants, as a loss of revenue, which must be sustained by the employers, would compel them to diminish the number of those employed. Finally, we submit that the question is of such vital importance to the general public that no alterations should be made in the existing conditions until a *plébiscite* of the people be taken in the district." If it is necessary, and the Bill is intended to be passed, a *plébiscite* of the people should be taken; let them say which day they would rather have, and let the *plébiscite* last for, say, five or seven years, so that this matter will not come up every year and cause a lot of animosity between different tradespeople. Some of them do what we call a wholesale or semi-wholesale trade, and to them it does not matter. They would rather have Saturday, because it would suit them. They have their trade; they send out their travellers, and do not sell their stuff over the counter. The travellers sell it outside. But the small retailer has to depend upon customers coming to his shop, and has to be open when it suits his clients to come. If he is not open when it suits his clients to come, well, the sooner he closes his shop the better, because he cannot exist unless at the pleasure of his clients. I think, gentlemen, that I have here that which will convince almost any one. This is the tape from my cash register [produced]. This length [indicated] shows the purchases for one day, Saturday, and this [indicated] shows them for the Monday. The Saturday record shows within about two of five hundred. There are seventy on this length.

5. *Mr. Ell.*] What day does that represent?—The Monday following. We, gentlemen, are in business to get a living for our wives and families, not for fun; and is it likely we can give up a certainty for an uncertainty when it is not required by the public? I have here a petition signed by 20,370 people in Christchurch.

6. *Mr. Tanner.*] What is the petition?—It was presented to the City Council in January of this year, praying that they would not alter the day. I also have here a petition containing the signatures of three hundred, within one or two, of the retail shopkeepers of Christchurch. It also was presented to the City Council, praying them not to alter the day, simply because the shopkeepers represented felt it would be a tremendous injustice to themselves, and to the people as well, if they had to close on Saturday. This petition is signed by some large firms as well as small ones. It is true, as has been said by the gentlemen representing Wellington, that Saturday closing would not affect the larger firms very much—in fact, I think it would suit them very much better. Then, why have they not the courage—the manly English courage—to close on the day which they think will suit them and leave other people alone? I thank you very much, gentlemen. I will not take up any more of your time.

HENRY BYLOVE SORENSON examined. (No. 8.)

Mr. Sorenson: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—I think you have had nearly every point touched upon that we from Christchurch could speak on. There is just one, however, that I would like to mention. It seems more especially to affect us in the farming line. In Christchurch, big as we think ourselves and good-looking as we are, we depend on the farmers somehow, and cannot get on without them. They are the backbone—of Christchurch especially. It would be most inconvenient to them to have the closing-day altered to Saturday, because that is their market-day. On a recent Saturday something like eight hundred farmers' carts were counted in the various yards in Christchurch, they having brought in their human freight for the purpose of doing shopping. To the farmers Saturday is a combined half-holiday and the occasion for purchasing the necessaries of life for the next week. Then, there is another aspect of the question. In fixing our holiday it is well, if possible, to have it so as not to hurt other people. In the country—I am speaking more especially of Canterbury—they have certain fixtures for every day of the week except Monday. There are sales at Rakaia, at Leeston, at Kirwee, at Rangiora; so they have every day fixed. We have Wednesday at Addington, and have our own market-day in town on Saturday. I myself have done a farmers' trade for something over thirty years, and claim to be well acquainted with farmers and their habits. My own trade—*i.e.*, that carried on on my premises—is twice as large on Saturday as on any other day of the week. I am an auctioneer, but I am speaking of that particular class of trade which we do every day. The funny thing about this Bill is that the very people whom it exempts do not want to be exempted. You will see at once the butcher will say, "Why should I keep open when all the rest of the town is closed!" The baker will say the same—we have got the bakers individually with us—and the hairdresser will say, "We do not want to be exempt at all. If the town is shut, we want to shut too, otherwise you may compel us to have two holidays." The tobacconist says, "We sell cigars and tobacco. You shut us up, but you allow hotels to keep open, and they sell, so a merchant says, as much as all the shops put together—I mean in tobacco and cigars." We had particulars taken at a number of shops in Christchurch, including grocers, drapers, butchers, and bakers. The takings on the Saturday were equal on an average to those on four days in the week. That is a very big average. These people cannot afford to shut up on a Saturday—that is very evident. The vexing part of the matter is this: the agitation comes largely from the big shops. We do not want to be personal. This is a matter which has caused us in Christchurch more trouble than anything, I should say, since I have been in business. The agitation comes from the big shops, who might very well have the courage of their opinion and shut up on Saturday, as they do in Sydney and Melbourne. There the smaller shops close on Wednesday. I can speak with regard to Sydney and Melbourne, because I was there two or three weeks ago. The large shops shut up on Saturday, and 90 per cent. of the small shops keep open on Saturday and close on Wednesday. I hope, gentlemen, that you will see the force of our arguments. As another gentleman said, we are not here to oppose legislation for our benefit. We are here because we feel persuaded that this Saturday closing would be extremely injurious not only to us but to all our fellow-colonists.

GEORGE DAVIES examined. (No. 9.)

Mr. Davies : Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—I represent a different class of trade from most of the other representatives, but I think we are entitled to some little consideration. These gentlemen have said that the largest portion of the trade of the towns is done on a Saturday. With us about the same thing is the case as with them.

7. *The Chairman.*] What is your business?—Hairdresser and tobacconist. I have eight men in my employ, besides myself, and it very often occurs that up to Friday night—I could show my books to prove it—those men have not earned their wages. They have not earned sufficient money to meet the wages-sheet. I have then only the one day in which to let them finish earning enough to pay their wages and give me some little profit. I suppose I am entitled to some profit if I employ that number of hands—I must have something out of them. What I say is a fact, and if at any time any of you gentlemen are in Christchurch I will show you my books to prove it. I suppose I do quite as large a trade on Saturday—in the shop as well as the hairdressing saloon—as I do on any other two days and a half, perhaps three days, in any week. There is another thing about our business that I would like to mention. The hotelkeepers sell a lot of cigars and cigarettes—in fact, I am informed by the merchants in Christchurch that the hotelkeepers buy perhaps four or five times the amount of cigars and cigarettes that the tobacconists do. If they sell the cigarettes and cigars which they buy, that is an injustice to us, for they are open whilst we are closed on Thursday afternoon. Then, in the Bill there is a clause exempting hairdressers. If the Saturday half-holiday is brought about—which I hope it will not be—that exemption will be of no use, because, with the exception of one firm, the hairdressers in Christchurch are all tobacconists as well, and the hairdressing saloon is at the rear of the tobacconist's shop, and therefore we could not have the saloon open if the shop were closed. The people must go through the shop to get to the saloon. There is another point: I do not think it would be much good our having the saloon open on Saturday afternoon if the rest of the town were closed, for then the people would not be in town—the public would not be there, and, of course, we must have the people. We cannot take our stuff out to them, or anything of that kind. Our business is not like other traders'. People do not buy a fortnight's supply at a time from us, or a month's. The people about the town buy from us by the sixpennyworth and shilling's worth, and so on. You must have the people there, otherwise you cannot do the business. I do not think I can say any more. I think the gentlemen here have said everything that can be said with reference to the matter.

JAMES KNIGHT examined. (No. 10.)

8. *Mr. Taylor.*] May I ask whether you will let us know what you think of this matter from a butcher's standpoint?—I may say, gentlemen, that I represent the butchers, but so much has been said by the other gentlemen that there is practically nothing left that I could say. We butchers recognise that it is proposed to exempt us from the Saturday closing, but we do not—as *Mr. Davies* said was the case with the hairdressers—see that it would be a great advantage to us. If the town were closed the people would not have any use in coming into town to make their cash purchases. They would not come in for the butcher alone. Consequently we do not see where the advantage would be. On the other hand, if we had to close up on Saturday at 1 o'clock we do not see how we could possibly get through our business. Ours is a perishable business, as you are aware, and if we relied upon customers doing business on a Friday evening, or on any other evening, there is no doubt we should not get the trade that we get now. Our trade is a good deal the same as the others—we do, perhaps, two or three times as much on a Saturday as on any other day in the week. When you come to think about it, Saturday closing means such a hardship on the working-man. Take, for instance, a man who works in a factory, or a man who is a carpenter, or one who follows any other trade: he knocks off at 12 or 1 o'clock on Saturday, and then has a chance to make his purchases, whereas if all the shops are shut up that privilege is taken away. It is really a great privilege for a working-man to be able to make his purchases on a Saturday afternoon. If the working-man was in the position that he had to revert to, we will say, the credit system, and had everything delivered and booked, there is no doubt but that he would have to pay more for it. I think it would be a great evil, and a great inducement for the working-man to take full advantage of that credit, get into debt, and find himself in difficulties, whereas if he pays cash he knows where he is, and spends his money accordingly.

Mr. Davies : Might I ask that if this Bill should go through the hairdressers and tobacconists be not exempt, because it would be of no use to us our being exempt.

Mr. Tanner : I want to ask a question of all members of the deputation. *Mr. Congreve* made a suggestion that a ballot should be taken of all the inhabitants of each town so as to fix a day in which all parties would join, whether shopkeepers or not.

Mr. Congreve : A ballot of the people of an entire district.

Mr. Tanner : We will not attempt to define boundaries just now; I am asking about the principle. Would all the members of the deputation agree to such a proposition?

Members of Deputation : Yes.

Mr. Tanner : Is that general?

Members of Deputation : Yes.

Mr. Wardell : I may say that this question has never been brought up in the Wellington Association, as far as I am aware.

Mr. Tanner : Do you all think it would be to the advantage of the community if there were a compulsory Saturday half-holiday on which all the shops were closed, when the working-men had been paid and had their money in their pockets, but when the publichouses were open?

Members of Deputation : No.

Mr. Sidey : I would like to ask the gentleman from the country district, who does not represent the retailers so much as other members, but the Chamber of Commerce, whether he

knows what the feeling of the retailers in the country is with regard to this matter. From what I gather, many of the arguments of those who have spoken tend to show that the country customers take advantage of the opportunity to go into the cities on Saturday and purchase their goods there. The trade must go somewhere, and it may be presumed that a portion of that trade might go to the retailers in the country towns if the shops were closed in the cities on Saturday afternoon. Can this gentleman who represents a country district tell me?

Mr. Graham : Masterton, where I come from, is really a country town, and there is no town outside of it except the other towns in the valley, so there would really be no shops outside, so to speak, except very small shops.

Mr. Sidey : Do you mean to say that the country customers come into Masterton?—Yes; and the other townships in the valley. There are no shops outside of them—at least, there are none worthy of consideration. I do not know a single shopkeeper in Masterton but who is strongly opposed to the Saturday half-holiday. It would be inimical to the interests of trade, and such a hardship upon the working-man. I may say that I know of only one shop between Masterton and Eketahuna—one country shop—and the distance is about thirty miles.

Mr. Sidey : I would like to ask Mr. Wardell in what way the trial of the Saturday half-holiday was made in Auckland and Christchurch?

Mr. Wardell : I think I mentioned that a trial was made in Napier. Saturday was fixed as the day for the half-holiday by the local authority in the ordinary way, but it was found to be absolutely unworkable, and application was made to the Government here to relieve them of the embarrassment they had got into. Personally, I cannot speak of Auckland; I can only speak from hearsay. In Christchurch—Mr. Taylor will correct me if I am not right—the attempt was voluntary. It was a genuine voluntary attempt made by the shopkeepers in the centre of the town, but it was found utterly unworkable by those shopkeepers who tried it.

Mr. Taylor : It was not uniform.

Mr. Wardell : It was a fair trial by the shopkeepers who made it.

Mr. Sidey : Will the deputation tell me where they consider the trade is likely to go if Saturday is fixed for the half-holiday—the trade has to be done?

Mr. Wardell : Might I be permitted to reply to that? With the shopkeepers in a large city the trade does not lie about their doors. Their existence depends on drawing trade from a distance. If there is no opportunity given to our customers to come from a distance we might just as well close up and allow the community to depend on the suburban storekeepers. I might instance Dunedin to Mr. Sidey. Would it not be a hardship to compel the public to confine their shopping to shops in South Dunedin by closing up, by the action of this measure, the large shops in Dunedin itself? That is what the effect of this Bill would be. It would militate against the large shops in the centre of the town, which, I maintain, are doing a legitimate business, and can only provide a large and varied stock if they draw their customers from an extended district. If the inhabitants of this extended district have no opportunity of coming into the centre of the cities the shopkeepers' trade there will be very seriously affected.

Mr. Colvin : The people will have to pay more for their requirements.

Mr. Wardell : Quite so.

Mr. Aitken : Are there any shops in Wellington or Christchurch that close on Saturday?

Mr. Wardell : John Duthie and Co. do, I think, and one or two of the larger ironmongers—practically wholesale houses.

Mr. Davies : No one does in Christchurch, except A. J. White, the furniture-dealer.

Mr. Taylor : I would like to ask Mr. Allan whether the volume of the Saturday trade is not largely determined by the fact that Saturday is pay-day? Supposing some other day than Saturday were the usual pay-day, would not the trade be done all the same?

Mr. Allan : I do not think that would make any difference, even if it were practicable, which I do not think it is. As an employer of labour I should most certainly object to paying on Friday. Saturday is looked upon as the finishing-day. If you make the finishing-day any other day than Saturday, which is the close of the week, you will find it very inconvenient in the making-up the payment of wages and the balancing-up for the week. You must have a balancing-day. I do not think the fact of wages being paid on Saturday has very much to do with the Saturday trade. Saturday afternoon suits the customers.

Mr. Taylor : If the whole of the town and country shops were closed on Saturday, do you still say that the city shops would lose a portion of their present business?

Mr. Allan : I believe they would lose a very large portion.

Mr. Taylor : Why?

Mr. Allan : Because of Saturday being the legitimate half-holiday for country people.

Mr. Taylor : The legitimate half-holiday?

Mr. Allan : The customary half-holiday. The country people come in on that day to make purchases, particularly suburban people. There are no working-men who could come into Wellington on any other day than Saturday.

Mr. Taylor : If they were prevented from coming into the towns on Saturday they would not come in on any other day of the week?

Mr. Allan : It would be impossible.

Mr. Taylor : Why?

Mr. Allan : They have not the time. How would you do if you employed a man in the country and he came to you on Friday and said, "I want to go into town this afternoon"?

Mr. Taylor : The argument is that the wage-earning class—or a large section of them—require to have the shopkeeping class available to trade with on the Saturday afternoon: is not that the whole thing in a nutshell?

Members of Deputation : Yes.

Mr. Allan : If I might refer to the question Mr. Sidey asked just now with regard to the country retailers, I would like to read this extract : " Napier, 24th July.—At a meeting of the Holiday Association this evening the following resolution was passed: ' That this association enters a strong protest against the Shops and Offices Bill now before Parliament, especially the clause relating to the compulsory half-holiday, and that such protest be wired immediately to the Premier, Sir William Russell, and Messrs. Fraser and Hall.' "

Mr. Aitken : I think that what Mr. Sidey meant was this : What would, say, Petone say to the half-holiday on Saturday ?

Mr. Allan : I should not be at all surprised if Petone were in favour of it.

Mr. Taylor : Do the members of the deputation oppose one half-day in the week other than Saturday being made the optional half-holiday ?

Mr. Wardell : No.

Mr. Taylor : Would members of the deputation agree to " Wednesday " being inserted in the Bill instead of " Saturday " ?

Members of Deputation : Yes.

Mr. Wardell : The Wednesday half-holiday gives two classes of people an opportunity of dealing with one another.

Mr. Taylor : You want the factory employees to continue to have a different half-holiday from that of the shopkeepers ?

Mr. Wardell : Yes.

Mr. Laurensen : Mr. Wardell spoke about what he called " legitimate " business. He said that if the Saturday half-holiday were introduced it would prevent a certain amount of legitimate business being done in the town. I want to know what he means by " legitimate. "

Mr. Wardell : That opens the large question suggested by Mr. Aitken—that probably Petone shopkeepers would like to see the universal half-holiday on Saturday, because the trade that comes into Wellington on Saturday now would not come in if Saturday were the day for the half-holiday, for the reason that the opportunity would not be there for the people to do the shopping. Therefore, I say that this proposal for a universal Saturday half-holiday is a very serious blow at the larger retailers in the centres of population. I used the words, " that these larger retailers were doing a legitimate business " in this sense : they provide very large facilities, have large stocks to choose from, and their life depends on being able to draw their customers from a distance. If you take away the opportunity for their customers to come to them from a distance you very seriously affect their trade.

Mr. Laurensen : In other words, boiled down, it amounts to this : According to you the universal Saturday half-holiday would have the effect of distributing trade among the smaller shops and taking it away from the larger, whereas as the matter stands at present the larger shops have the pull over the smaller ones. The large city shops have the pull over the smaller ones in the country, but under the proposed arrangement the smaller shops would have a better show ?

Mr. Wardell : Under the present arrangement we all have a fair chance. Each man has a fair chance to attract what business he can under the present arrangement. If you bring in the Saturday half-holiday you seriously handicap the trader who has his shop in one of the cities.

Mr. Laurensen : You do not mean to tell us that if there were a universal half-holiday there would be less meat eaten or tea drunk ?

Mr. Wardell : If you compelled our customers to buy their supplies at the smaller shops next door to them, probably ; and I think I am safe in maintaining that the result would be they would pay more for their stores.

Mr. Laurensen : At that rate you do not speak so much in your own interests as in those of the customer, whom you wish to see get a cheap article ?

Mr. Wardell : Yes ; and, of course, I am defending the legitimate trade, which you appear to be attacking, of the larger retailers in the large centres.

Mr. Laurensen : I beg your pardon. I am not attacking legitimate trade. I was anxious to get a definition of the word " legitimate, " and you have given me a very imperfect definition, because if there is legitimate trade there must be some illegitimate trade, and I want to know what you refer to.

Mr. Wardell : The effect of this Bill would be as you suggest—that the same amount of trade would have to be done, but it would be better distributed.

Mr. Laurensen : Under a universal Saturday half-holiday ?

Mr. Wardell : Yes ; that is your contention.

Mr. Laurensen : No ; it is not my contention. You say that if Saturday were made the universal half-holiday the large shops in the town would lose business, which would then go straight out among the smaller shops in the suburbs. You said that ; do not put words in my mouth.

Mr. Wardell : The large shops in the cities would be severely handicapped. I say that the larger shops are doing a legitimate business in attracting customers from a distance, and they would be prevented from attracting these customers if the people living at a distance had not the opportunity to come to them.

Mr. Laurensen : Then the man who is not attracting customers from a distance is doing an illegitimate business ? If you are doing a legitimate business some one else is doing an illegitimate one ?

Mr. Wardell : No ; that does not follow in the least.

Mr. Laurensen : I am very anxious to get a definition of what you mean by " legitimate " trade. You now define " legitimate " trade as that which consists of large shops attracting any business which otherwise would go into the small shops in the suburbs—attracting and concentrating that business into the large shops in the town. I think that was your definition of " legitimate " business ?

Mr. Wardell: The other word suggested was "customary," but I do not know that it would mean exactly what I wish to draw attention to. What I mean is this: the larger shops are doing a legitimate trade—a trade that no objection can be raised to; and if you make this proposal law you handicap them from doing this trade to which no objection can be made. The trade that they are doing is legitimate in that respect—that no objection can be made to it.

Mr. Laurenson: Then, I ask, can any objection be made to the trade that the small man is doing out in the suburbs?

Mr. Wardell: Not at all. I have no objection.

Mr. Laurenson: Then, I ask again, will any less meat be eaten or less tea drunk or less clothes worn if the half-holiday is changed to Saturday?

Mr. Wardell: No, certainly not; but instead of the larger traders doing the trade, as I have stated, you will drive it into the hands of Chinamen and people who do business till a later hour than other storekeepers.

Mr. Laurenson: Are Chinamen, then, exempt from the law?

Mr. Wardell: The effect of the early-closing provisions in this Bill will be that the Chinamen in Wellington will out-vote the white grocers.

Mr. Laurenson: Are the Chinese grocers exempt from the law?

Mr. Wardell: They are not exempt from the law, but the effect of this Saturday half-holiday will be that the trade will be done after 6 o'clock on the other nights of the week. The bulk of the late shopping done in the grocery business is in the Chinamen's hands.

Mr. Laurenson: Then, if we pass a law fixing certain hours for closing-time the Chinaman is going to be exempt, is he?

Mr. Wardell: No; but under the proposal here a Chinaman has an equal right to vote with us.

Mr. Laurenson: But he is brought under the law the same as the white man; so it will not drive trade into the hands of the Chinaman?

Mr. Wardell: But he will outvote us as to the hour for closing under clause 14, because he has the power to vote the same as the white man.

Mr. Laurenson: I would like to ask whether any member of the deputation here was in business prior to the law being passed which compelled a weekly half-holiday to be observed?

Mr. Allan: Yes; I was in business then.

Mr. Laurenson: Do you remember the uproar that was raised throughout the colony, and do you remember the prophecies of blue ruin that were made then in connection with the introduction of a weekly half-holiday on any day in the week?

Mr. Allan: Yes.

Mr. Laurenson: Do you remember that there was far more agitation then against a half-holiday at all than there is now against even the half-holiday being given on Saturday?

Mr. Allan: Possibly.

Mr. Laurenson: Is any less trade being done by the average business-man in New Zealand since that half-holiday was introduced than was done before?

Mr. Allan: No; I do not think so.

Mr. Laurenson: There is another question I would like to ask. Some one—you, I think—objected to wages being paid on a Friday. I do not know what the case is in Wellington, but I am going to ask about Christchurch. Are you aware that in Christchurch almost every place where there is a large number of employees pays its hands on Friday?

Mr. Allan: I never heard that statement.

Mr. Laurenson: I will name some of the places. The Kaiapoi Woollen-factory pay their hands on Friday.

Mr. Allan: Do they finish up their work every Friday?

Mr. Laurenson: I do not know that, but they pay their wages on Friday night. I could go on naming other places. In Christchurch, with hardly a single exception, the large foundries and businesses pay of a Friday night.

Mr. Allan: That is information to me.

Mr. Laurenson: I would like to ask Mr. Wardell if he is aware of this: almost without exception every large business in Christchurch—Ballantyne's, Strange's, Ashby Bergh's, Mason Struthers's, the Farmers' Co-operative Association (which is particularly for farmers)—every one of those large places, which between them employ, I suppose, three out of every five men employed in shops, warehouses, and businesses in Christchurch—every one of them has signed a petition to have the half-holiday fixed for Saturday?

Mr. Wardell: You do not mention a trade in which I am interested in that list.

Mr. Laurenson: I do not want to know about your trade. I ask you, are you aware that what I have just stated is the case?

Mr. Wardell: With those firms you have mentioned; but there are other important firms that you have not mentioned.

Mr. Laurenson: Are you aware that it is so with the firms I have named?

Mr. Wardell: Yes; and I am also aware that the bulk of those firms that you have mentioned are drapers and wholesale ironmongers. We have exactly the same position in Wellington here. Firms of the class of Kirkcaldie and Stains and Whitcombe and Tombs, and ironmongers of the class of Duthie and Co. and Briscoe and Co., are desirous of the same thing. We admit that there is one class of shopkeepers who are in favour of Saturday closing; but we say that their interests are not the same as those represented by the deputations here.

Mr. Laurenson: You say the half-holiday on Saturday had been tried in Napier, Auckland, and Christchurch, and had been more or less a failure. I will name a small town where it was tried—Lyttelton. Do you know that?

Mr. Wardell: No.

Mr. Laurensen : You do not know what caused it to break down there ?

Mr. Wardell : No.

Mr. Laurensen : And you do not know what the financial effect of it was on the businesses that tried the experiment ?

Mr. Wardell : No.

Mr. Aitken : An important question was asked of the deputation which, perhaps, was not quite properly understood by them. It was this : "Supposing the Saturday half-holiday is made universal, will not the same amount of money be spent on food and clothing as is spent now ?" The question being put in that way, the deputation answered, "Yes." I would like to put this aspect of the matter before them, and ask, Would their answer be the same if the hotels are to be open of a Saturday afternoon ?

Members of Deputation : No.

Mr. McLeod : I would like to answer that question. The contention of the deputation, I think, is that there would not be quite the same amount of money spent on food and clothes if the hotels were open when the shops were shut on Saturday afternoon, because a certain amount of the money would go to the hotels ; consequently, there would be less necessaries bought, I think, and probably less food. The questions have been raised by Mr. Laurensen of the large and the small shops, and legitimate trade. I only wish to refer to a case under the present conditions, and you will see clearly how this Bill would affect the city trade. At the present time the traders at South Wellington are lit up until 9 o'clock at night, while right along the city, almost without exception, you will find closing at 6 o'clock. The contention of certain members of the deputation is this : That if you make Saturday closing compulsory, while at the same time you allow section 14 to be loosely drawn, as it is—a section having no effect at all—it will tend not only to make those now open till 9 remain open—we do not wish anything against the present condition of affairs—but it will tend to create more late shopping ; and we say that is not in the interests of the employees nor the employers—that it is a bad system. If you make this clause 7 effective you must make clause 14 compulsory, otherwise the Bill will be a farce—it will be no good.

Mr. Taylor : Does the deputation admit that if Saturday is fixed by statute as the day for the compulsory half-holiday, it shall also apply to the hotel-bars ?

Members of Deputation : Most certainly.

Deputation from the Licensed Victuallers' Association of New Zealand, consisting of ARTHUR R. V. LODDER and JOSEPH MANDEL, examined. (Nos. 11 and 12.)

The Chairman : We understand that you gentlemen have come to give evidence on the Shops and Offices Bill, and we shall be glad if you will make a statement.

Mr. Lodder : We represent the Licensed Victuallers' Association of New Zealand, having been selected by the committee to give evidence. The clause that we want you to take into consideration, gentlemen, is clause 12 of the Bill. Before going into the details of the clause I may state that we are under an Arbitration Court award with regard to servants' hours, holidays, and pay. I have a copy of the award here, signed by the President of the Court, which shows the facilities provided for the servants. I do not know whether the Committee would like the award to be read.

The Chairman : You can leave it with us.

Mr. Lodder : Very well ; I will leave it on the table, to be perused. [Award produced.] Also a letter which has been received from the Premier in reply to one sent to him. [Letter produced.] Clause 12 is the one that we have come to speak about. It says : "(1.) For the purpose of extending the benefits of this Act relating to the weekly half-holiday and wages therefor to persons employed as assistants in hotels, eating-houses, or restaurants, but for no other purpose,—(a) every hotel, eating-house, or restaurant shall be deemed to be a shop ; (b) every keeper of an hotel, eating-house, or restaurant shall be deemed to be an occupier of a shop ; and (c) every person employed in the hotel, eating-house, or restaurant shall be deemed to be a shop-assistant. (2.) The half-holiday to which a shop-assistant is entitled under this section may be on such working-day as, in the case of each individual shop-assistant, the occupier thinks fit. (3.) Nothing herein shall be deemed to compel the keeper of any hotel, eating-house, or restaurant to close his premises for a half-holiday on any working-day." I may say, having been in business as a hotelkeeper for about fifteen years, that it is a different business from the general business of the city or anywhere else. In the case of a grocer, or draper, or person engaged in any other business carried on in the towns or boroughs, if he sends the servants away for their half-holiday he can close the place ; but in our case, ours being licensed premises, we cannot close them. If we sent all our servants away we could not carry on business. I employ thirty-four servants, and if I had to give, according to this clause in the Bill, all the servants a half-holiday—one half-day in the week each—it would mean that six would have to go off on each half-day in the week for the lot to get a half-holiday. Mr. Mandel will be able to give you further information on the subject. I do not wish to detain the Committee any longer.

Mr. Mandel : Mr. Chairman and gentleman,—I indorse the remarks made by our president, Mr. Lodder. I would like to explain that if this Bill is passed and we are not exempt from its operation it will mean a tremendous inconvenience to the general public. I have been in the trade for eleven years, and I keep at the present time, I think I may say, one of the principal hotels in Wellington. I employ thirty-eight servants at present. If we had to give our servants a half-holiday, it would mean that we should either have to give it to them all on one day and practically close up our business from 1 o'clock till the next morning, and the people in the house would have to help themselves then, or we should have to give eight servants a holiday on each day of the week. That, again, would mean that it would be impossible to work our business short-handed.

It would not mean that we should have to give eight of them a holiday on one day of the week only, but each day we should be short of six or eight servants. Of course, you will see that if we did not have the hands there, and if we got others to put in their places, it would simply mean a great inconvenience, not only to ourselves, but to the general public. We generally study the public. The class of people that we get at the Empire and other hotels pay high rates, and naturally expect to be well attended to, and to get every comfort and the best accommodation possible. I mention this to show the inconvenience to which we should be put, and also the general public. I think that, if possible, we should be left as we are now—*i.e.*, under the Arbitration Court award, the conditions being what the Court deemed best. We seem to get on all right with the servants, and they seem to be satisfied.

Mr. Lodder: Under the Arbitration Court award, which is in force until March, 1904, we have to give each servant two holidays every three months—that is, if the servant has been three months in one's employ. If the servants do not get the two holidays we have to pay them wages in lieu of them—two days' wages in place of two days' holiday. As a rule, we find it better to pay them the two days' wages than to let them off. Some of them are off, you may say, two hours every day in the week. There is only a certain number of the staff kept on duty continuously, but all have to be there during meal-hours, and attend to the guests at the house. In a house where you have accommodation for 115 or 120 people you want the whole of the staff to attend on those people in order to give satisfaction. It is not only that you could not go out into the street and pick up half a dozen men at half an hour's notice, or anything like that, to take the place of the half-dozen you had let off for the half-day, but probably if you could get them it would capsize the general trade of the house. In fact, if you engage a new servant he has to be at work two or three days before he gets into the proper running of a new establishment. Therefore I hope the Committee will eliminate this clause with regard to hotels from the Bill. It is a clause that has not been asked for by the servants at all. The servants gave their evidence before the Arbitration Court—the type-written copy of the evidence on both sides containing about 150 sheets of foolscap—and the Union agreed to accept the terms, being very pleased that they had the Arbitration Court award; and there has not been any difficulty since the award was made. The servants and the employers seem to work amicably together, and get on very well. I omitted to refer to clause 13. That is a clause relating to barmaids. It mentions "female assistant." That would apply to, say, a small hotel in the country, where very likely the man and his wife were the only ones to look after the establishment, or they may have a daughter a servant. If the female was allowed to be in the bar only from 9 in the morning till 9 at night, and the proprietor himself was sick, there would be no one to attend to the establishment before 9 o'clock in the morning, or after 9 at night; and the Act says that a publican must open at 6 and close at 10. I have no doubt that *Mr. Mandel* will be able to express himself more clearly than I can do on this point.

Mr. Mandel: With regard to barmaids, I see that there is a Bill before the House to abolish barmaids. Speaking so far as the association, of which *Mr. Lodder* is president and I am vice-president, is concerned, I might say that we have often brought up the subject of a Barmaids Bill. I should say that the provision in this Bill is not workable at all, because if we let the barmaids go at 9 o'clock we should simply have to get other hands for the one hour; and, of course, it would not pay to keep a double staff for the sake of one hour; so we should have to abolish barmaids altogether and replace them with men. That, I think, would place the business on a better footing than if we had to let the barmaids off at 9 o'clock. To have the barmaids there from 9 o'clock to 9 would be of no use at all. I would rather say, "Abolish them altogether," than have them if they could only work those hours. That is all I have to say as far as barmaids are concerned.

Mr. Taylor: Do the hotel employees get a half-holiday now at all?

Mr. Lodder: No; with the exception of the barmen and barmaids, who are provided for in the Act. They get a half-holiday once every week.

Mr. Taylor: But not the other servants?

Mr. Lodder: No. They get their holidays according to the Arbitration Court award. If a servant has been in the employ of a man for three months he can either have two holidays or two days' pay. That is an arrangement which the Arbitration Court award allows.

Mr. Taylor: Would the closing of the bar altogether on the half-holiday that may be fixed upon help you at all?

Mr. Lodder: Not at all.

Mr. Taylor: Does the definition of "barmaid" in the present Licensing Act cover the licensee's wife? Is she not exempt?

Mr. Lodder: Yes; she is exempt.

Mr. Taylor: Do you object to the bar being closed on the day that the other trades observe for their half-holiday?

Mr. Lodder: I think so.

Mr. Taylor: Why?

Mr. Lodder: I suppose it is because it would disarrange the trade and inconvenience the public if the bar were locked up.

The Chairman: The question is: Is there any objection, supposing all the shops in the city were to close on Wednesday, to the bars of the hotels being closed also?

Mr. Lodder: Yes.

Mr. Taylor: What is that objection?

Mr. Lodder: Travellers come in by steamers and trains and want refreshment; but, if what you suggest were carried out they would find the bar closed and the barmen gone away. Then, one would have to close up at 1 o'clock—dinner-time—just the busiest time of the day; and there would be no one to supply the gentlemen coming in. They may require lemonade, or ginger-

beer, or beer, or any other refreshment; but the establishment would be closed—the drinking portion of it.

Mr. Taylor : Not against the *bonâ fide* traveller?

Mr. Lodder : There would be no one to supply him. The other servants would be engaged on other duties.

Mr. Taylor : People could get everything they wanted except liquor?

Mr. Lodder : They could get the eating part of what they wanted.

Mr. Mandel : To close on a half-holiday would encourage people to break the law.

Mr. Taylor : Do you do a considerable trade in cigars and cigarettes on the half-holiday that the other shops—including tobacconists—are observing, as has been stated this morning?

Mr. Mandel : If it were brought in by Act of Parliament that hotelkeepers could not keep cigars and cigarettes we should not object. They are not profitable.

Mr. Taylor : You desire to have the right of the hotelkeepers to sell cigars and cigarettes abolished?

Mr. Mandel : Yes, on the half-holiday.

Mr. Lodder : That is, when the tobacconists and others are closed. But that is not one of the things that we wish to press before the Committee.

Mr. Taylor : But you have no objection to the right of the hotelkeepers to sell cigars and cigarettes on the half-holiday being abolished?

Mr. Mandel : No.

Mr. Taylor : What do you mean when you say there is no profit on that part of your trade? Do you sell at cost-price?

Mr. Mandel : No. But a cigar that costs about 5½d. we sell for 6d.

Mr. Taylor : You are willing to forego the right of trading in cigars and cigarettes on the half-holiday in fairness to the other shops?

Mr. Mandel : Yes.

Mr. Kirkbride : There seems to be some little contradiction in view of what has been brought out by Mr. Taylor. I understood from one of these gentlemen that if a country hotelkeeper was sick, his wife or daughter could not sell liquor before 9 o'clock in the morning. Is that so? I think that was a mistake.

Mr. Lodder : I made that statement. The clause in the Bill says "female." "Female" means any woman, I think.

Mr. Aitken : Mr. Lodder means that under the existing law a hotelkeeper's wife could serve in the bar before 9 o'clock in the morning, but under the suggested provision in this Bill she could not serve then.

Mr. Lodder : That is so.

Mr. Kirkbride : Have the hours for the workers in hotels been fixed by the Arbitration Court?

Mr. Lodder : They have; and also the pay for the servants.

Mr. Kirkbride : All the workers are assistants?

Mr. Lodder : Yes.

Mr. Mandel : I may say that I have thirty-eight servants, and never have a complaint.

Mr. Ell : You are aware, of course, that other shopkeepers in Wellington are working under awards of the Arbitration Court—for instance, the grocers?

Mr. Lodder : Yes.

Mr. Ell : Perhaps you are aware also that they do not object to the provisions of this Bill for fixing the half-holiday?

Mr. Lodder : The grocer, the butcher, the draper, and those engaged in any other business, can close their establishments; the hotelkeepers cannot close theirs. They have to keep open under the terms of the Act; and to carry on your business you must have the servants there to do the work.

Mr. Ell : What are the hours that have been fixed?

Mr. Lodder : Eleven hours a day; so-many hours a week.

Mr. Mandel : But they have two hours off in between.

Mr. Ell : Are there eleven actual working-hours?

Mr. Lodder : Yes, by the Arbitration Court award; but some of the servants do not actually work eleven hours.

Mr. Mandel : It is at the meal-time that they have to work. I have a staff of eight waiters; four of them are off from 3 to 5 o'clock, but at meal-time they are all there.

The Chairman : That is all, gentlemen.

Mr. Lodder : On behalf of the association I have to thank you very much for the patient hearing you have given us. I hope you will take into favourable consideration what we have said, and treat the matter judiciously.

The Chairman : We will consider what you have said most carefully.

FRIDAY, 7TH AUGUST, 1903.

Messrs. JOHN MCFARLANE, ARCHIBALD MILLER, and JOHN WARDELL in attendance. (Nos. 13, 14, and 15.)

The Chairman : I understand you desire to give evidence with regard to the Shops and Offices Bill which this Committee is considering?

Mr. McFarlane : Yes; we are a deputation appointed by the Dunedin Master Grocers' Association to come to Wellington to state the views of the association with regard to the provisions of the Shops and Offices Bill.

The Chairman : Are you president of the association?

Mr. McFarlane : No ; my brother is, but he has not been able to come here.

The Chairman : Will you make any statement you wish to make ?

Mr. McFarlane : The first point we wish to bring under the notice of the Committee is the provision for the Saturday half-holiday—the closing of shops at 1 o'clock on Saturday afternoons ; and, secondly, the compulsory closing of all shops at 6 o'clock on four days in the week. We now close at 6 o'clock, and we are in favor of making it compulsory for all shops to be closed at 6 o'clock. With regard to the Saturday half-holiday, we are not in favour of it. It would be a great loss to all traders in our city. They would be very much affected by it. I have not been much connected with the association, and with these few opening remarks I will leave it to the other members of the deputation to say what they think fit.

Mr. Millar : We are a deputation representing the Dunedin Master Grocers' Association. We represent about thirty shops in Dunedin, and we have been asked to come here and protest against the Saturday half-holiday. Our principal reason for doing so is that on one occasion we tried Saturday-afternoon closing for about six or eight months, and we found that a great deal of trade which used to come to Dunedin before that never reached there during that time. Consequently our takings were much less. One reason for remaining open is that it is recognised in Dunedin that Saturday is the pay-day for the working-classes. If we have to close at 1 o'clock on Saturday we cannot expect our customers to come and pay their accounts on that day, and we cannot expect them to come and pay on Monday when they are busy with other matters. Therefore we think it is advisable to allow shops to be open on Saturday afternoons. Another reason is that there are very many people who come into Dunedin from Port Chalmers, Waikouaiti, and other places on Saturdays to do their shopping, and if we had to close on that afternoon these people would not come in. We are in favour of closing for half a day on one day in the week, and would suggest that that day should be either Thursday or Wednesday. There is another reason against closing on Saturday afternoon, and it is that those who receive their pay on that day might spend it in hotels, and this money would not be available for paying their butchers and grocers and other tradesmen for the supply of goods to their houses. With reference to compulsory closing at 6 o'clock on four other days in the week, we know that there is a growing tendency, even in some of the larger shops, to keep open until 8 or 9 o'clock. The employer goes to his tea at 5 o'clock and comes back at 6 and allows his assistants to go away, but the shop remains open until 8 or 9 o'clock. We find that this practice is growing in respect to many shops at the north end of the town. There are a number of shops open until 8 or 9 o'clock. We think it is absolutely necessary that it should be provided that all shops shall close at 6 o'clock, otherwise those who now close voluntarily at 6 o'clock will have to remain open later in order to protect their own interests. There is one other point that I should like to touch upon, and that is with regard to obtaining permission to work overtime. It is perhaps of not very much importance, but still there may be occasions on which we should have to get permission when it would be very inconvenient. For instance, a carter may have to set off with a load at 5 o'clock and may not return till 8 o'clock. How would it be possible in such a case to get permission for the man to work overtime ? We do our best to finish work at 6 o'clock, but there are cases of emergency when we require to bring the men back after tea. We should have to get permission to do so, and at that time it would be very difficult to find the Inspector. Another point is that we think we should be allowed to work under the award of the Arbitration Court. We have that award, and we think that should govern the arrangement of our business. I do not think there are any other points which I wish to bring under the notice of the Committee.

Mr. Wardell : There are a few little matters in the Bill which I should like to refer to, such, for example, as having to get a letter from the Inspector before you can work overtime. I think that is a provision which it would be very difficult to carry out. Then, with regard to the Arbitration Court, I suppose it is the case that the Arbitration Court award overrides the Act ; but, at the same time, if the Act made certain provision the Arbitration Court possibly would not care to differ from it. The Arbitration Court has been set up to adjudicate on the special things in regard to the different trades, and I think where there is an award of that Court it should be left as it is to settle all questions with respect to wages, hours of working, overtime, and so on. I understand that a great many assistants object to the payment of overtime, because they know they would lose more by insisting upon that payment than they would gain. In regard to the grocers' business, there is an overtime award, but there is a certain amount of overtime allowed without payment ; but this Bill would do away with that. I should like to see it left to the Arbitration Court to fix the hours of work, the wages, and overtime, as they do at present. Another point in the Bill is that there are to be only fifty-two hours a week for the men. That would cause us to close at 9 o'clock on Saturday night. At present we have fifty-three hours in our award by the Arbitration Court, and that enables us to keep open until 10 o'clock. If you close us up at 1 o'clock on Saturday afternoon, then we should have to keep open until 9 o'clock on Friday night ; and the working-people coming off work at 5 o'clock and having to get their tea would not get out again until 7 o'clock, and then have to get home again early to be able to start work next morning, so that they would not have much time to do their shopping. Then, again, if there is to be this Saturday half-holiday, there should be no exemptions. The Dunedin Retailers' Association has passed a resolution asking that there shall be no exemptions. The hotels and every other place should be closed on Saturday afternoon if it is to be made the half-holiday. I would also point out that in Dunedin there has been no agitation on the subject of the half-holiday. I believe that the assistants there realise that if it is carried out they will lose by it. They realise that if the trade loses they must lose also. Could you not put Wednesday in the Bill for the half-holiday, putting in a clause also allowing those to close on Saturday who wish to do so ? It would enable some shops to take half-holiday on one day and others on the other. At present some shops take the half-holiday on one day

and some on another, without any limitation, and I understand that is objectionable; but if Wednesday were made the half-holiday by statute, with provision to enable those who wished to keep it on Saturday to do so, that objection would be got over. Then, there should be no exemptions to the hours of closing. In Dunedin this keeping open at night is growing. You can understand that where a large shop is situated amongst a number of smaller shops, and these smaller shops are kept open till all hours, it is a great hardship on the large shops. If the compulsory closing of all shops is not carried on the four days in the week the practice will spread, and we shall be driven back to the old hours, and we very much object to that. If the Saturday half-holiday is carried that sort of thing will be carried on more than ever. We shall have shops all round keeping open till late. Then, there is another provision in the Bill which requires consideration, and that is the clause which requires that there shall be a requisition of two-thirds in favour of closing at 6 o'clock. The Town Clerk has to certify that the requisition has been signed by two-thirds of the shopkeepers; but there is no register of the number of shops in the town. How, then, is the Town Clerk to certify that the requisition has been signed by a majority of two-thirds? We should like to see it made compulsory that shops should be closed at 6 o'clock, and that those who want to keep open later should get up a requisition signed by two-thirds. When you consider the number of small shops—Chinamen and others—you will never get the required number to sign in favour of early closing; and then there is the point that there is no register of the number of shopkeepers.

Mr. McFARLANE examined.

1. *Mr. Laurensen.*] I understand, Mr. McFarlane, that you are in favour of compulsory closing of shops at 6 o'clock?—I am, sir.

2. When do the majority of shops in Dunedin close?—At different times. Some are kept open until 11 o'clock. There was one open a short time ago until half-past 11 o'clock. It had the gas burning at that hour.

3. I suppose the better class of shops close earlier?—Yes; they close at 6 o'clock. We agreed twenty-seven years ago to close at 6 p.m., and two or three years later others came into line.

4. You do as much business when closing at 6 o'clock as you did before?—I think from what I can remember we do as good a business. When we were farmers at the Taieri the shops were supposed to close at 6 o'clock, but on one or two occasions men would come and ask for a pound or two to get some necessaries. They got what they asked for although all the places were closed. I said to one, "You cannot spend that money although you have got it," and he said, "Oh, I can go into Outram and get into a shop through the back door, and get all I want."

Mr. MILLER examined.

5. *Mr. Laurensen.*] You said, Mr. Miller, that you were opposed to the Saturday-afternoon closing?—Yes.

6. You say it was tried for some time in Dunedin?—Yes.

7. Did every one close, or was it only a certain section?—The greater number of the grocers closed. Travellers going round for orders would be asked by customers, "Are you closing on Saturday afternoons?" and if you did not close they said, "We cannot give you the orders." The feeling of a certain section of the public compelled us to close on that occasion, but that feeling changed later on. One or two grocers who did not close on Saturday afternoon did a certain amount of business; but, as a matter of fact, the Saturday half-holiday was very inconvenient both to the traders and the customers.

8. You say the trade that used to come to Dunedin did not reach it through the Saturday-afternoon closing?—Yes.

9. Where did the trade go to?—I could not say. It did not come to the city.

10. You do not mean to say that the people were using less tea and sugar—they were still consuming the same amount?—I would not say that. For instance, a lady coming into the town might see something tempting and she would buy it.

11. Then, it was only the luxuries they had to go without, and their necessities they must buy somewhere, whether you were closed or not?—Yes; but, you see, the cheap fares on the railways, and the excursions, and that sort of thing bring the people into the town on the Saturday.

12. So that it comes to this: that if it is bad for the shopkeepers it is good for the husbands, as the ladies cannot spend the money?—Very likely.

13. You say that the cheap fares on Saturday bring the people into Dunedin. If there were cheap fares on Friday would it not do the same thing?—I do not think so. If the country people came in on the Friday they would have to go home again early, because they would have to be up early next morning to go to work. It is different if they do their business in town on the Saturday because then they have the Sunday rest before them.

14. From your own personal point of view—putting yourself in the position of wanting a holiday—would you like the half-holiday at the end of the week with the prospect of a day's rest before you, or in the middle of the week with the prospect of having to go to work the next morning?—From the holiday point of view I would prefer the Saturday, but from the business point of view I would prefer it not to be Saturday.

15. If matters could be arranged so that business would not be interfered with, you admit that it would be better to have the half-holiday on Saturday?—Yes.

16. One thing that interferes with business is that there are cheap fares on Saturday, and another is that working-men are paid on Saturday, so that they can spend their money on that night?—Yes.

17. Is it not a fact that very many of the large employers of labour pay their men on Friday?—I believe some do.

18. I do not know what obtains in Dunedin, but I know that in Christchurch the large employers do so?—It may be so, but even in the event of the men being paid on Friday they cannot get their groceries that night, and they cannot get them on the Saturday morning; whereas now they have the Saturday afternoon and evening, and things are rather tempting, and there are sales made that otherwise would never come about.

19. You said that the hotels would remain open if the shops were closed, and that the money would be spent in the hotels. If the hotels were closed also would not that meet one of your difficulties?—It might.

20. And if the cheap fares were on Friday?—That would help considerably.

Mr. WARDELL examined.

21. *Mr. Laurenson.*] You said, Mr. Wardell, that 9 o'clock on Friday night would not be late enough to keep open to enable working-men to get their groceries; would 10 o'clock be late enough?—It depends upon where they have to come from; but in any case they would not go out very much on Friday evening—not as if it were Saturday.

22. You are in favour of closing all shops at 6 o'clock on four days in the week?—Yes; but in some cases it might not be possible to carry that out. It would be right to do so in the large towns, but it would be wise to have an exemption made in country places.

23. I understood you to say that the Saturday half-holiday would increase the tendency to remain open late on other nights: how is that?—Saturday afternoon and evening is the only leisure time that working-men have to buy what they want, and if we have to close on Saturday afternoon there would be a tendency to keep open late on other nights so that they could get what they wanted.

24. You say that there has been no agitation in Dunedin in favour of the Saturday half-holiday?—There has not been agitation in Dunedin; it would drive the trade elsewhere.

25. Then it would go into the country?—Yes; but I do not think Parliament should legislate with such an object as that.

26. *Mr. Barber.*] A good deal is made of working-men not doing their shopping after they leave their work at 5 o'clock. How much would the working-man spend then? Not much. And the ladies do their shopping chiefly in the daytime. Is that not so?—To a great extent; but when the agitation was got up some years ago to close on Saturday afternoon, and we did so, it was found to be very inconvenient; and when we opened again on that afternoon there was general satisfaction. The general opinion was that it was much better.

27. These other conditions of cheap fares and other conveniences would have to be made to suit the half-holiday?—Of course, that might make a difference; and also if the half-holiday were made compulsory all round.

28. You are aware that the trades councils and labour unions are in favour of the Saturday half-holiday?—I suppose it is so; but if I might suggest, I would ask: Is it not quite possible that there is a certain amount of sentiment in that; and that really at the bottom the working-men are not in favour of it? It is only reasonable that the shops should be open for the working-people when they have their half-holiday. It must be made convenient for them.

29. Are not the shop-assistants worse off than the ordinary working-men, seeing that they have to work from 9 o'clock to 6, and have no time to do their shopping?—There are nearly always some shops open on the Wednesday when we close, so that they really have a very good opportunity of doing their shopping.

Mr. MILLER re-examined.

30. *Mr. Sidey.*] You said, Mr. Miller, that you represented about thirty shops in Dunedin. Does that include grocers' shops in the suburbs as well as in the city?—I believe there are some members of our association in the suburbs—in fact, I am quite sure of it. We represent about thirty shops in the city and suburbs, who asked us to come to Wellington to protect their interests.

31. You consider there would be a considerable loss to your trade by closing on Saturday afternoon. Could you tell us whether the volume of your trade is done in the evening or in the afternoon?—I would say both in the afternoon and in the evening. The volume of the trade is done between 3 o'clock and 6 o'clock in the afternoon, and between 7 o'clock and 10 in the evening, allowing for the tea-hour between 6 and 7.

32. I suppose the country customers come chiefly in the afternoon?—Yes; a great many come in from the country in the afternoon, and there is generally a great rush in the trade about 4 o'clock, before the trains go out again.

33. If the Saturday half-holiday is carried, will it take the trade to the country? Supposing the half-holiday is made to apply to both town and country, then they could not buy either in the town or the country?—They can buy in the country on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday.

34. Could they not find some other day to come into the town?—I can only repeat that the week's-end day is the most convenient for them, and in all probability their visits to the town would not be so frequent as formerly if Saturday is made the half-holiday.

Mr. WARDELL re-examined.

35. You, Mr. Wardell, expressed the opinion that there should be absolutely no exemption. I understood you to mean that hotels should be closed. Do you mean that fishmongers, fruiterers, and other shops with perishable goods should also be closed?—I fail to see why there should be any exemption. If this Saturday half-holiday is a good thing, then it should be made to apply to all.

36. It would naturally be a great hardship to compel some of these shops with perishable

goods to close for so long a time?—Well, it seems rather absurd that tobacconists and photographers should be allowed to remain open.

37. You think that fishmongers, fruiterers, and trades with perishable goods should not have an exemption?—If it is to be a Saturday half-holiday it should be a half-holiday all round.

38. *Mr. Aitken.*] One of the deputation said he would like to see a provision in the Act that every shop should close at 6 o'clock—of course, allowing them to open on the late night. Would there be any chance of any one starting business in a small way under those conditions?—I do not see why the fact of having to close at 6 o'clock on certain days should prevent them entering into a business.

39. Is it not a fact that these small shops do a large trade when the big ones are closed?—No doubt; but how many of these small shops are run by men who are at work during the day and then, when they return from their work, keep their shops open till all hours, while those who employ labour and have stringent conditions imposed upon them are compelled to close early. It is rather a handicap on those who employ labour.

40. Your contention is this: that half the population has to work so as to supply the other half. That is to say, you would like to have a universal half-holiday—everybody to be brought into line. That means that you would not have trains running or 'busses or tram-cars, for it would be necessary to employ men to do that work so as to serve the other half of the population?—That is the contention. It is not as though it were an occasional half-holiday, where one section can close on one day and another on another.

41. Supposing it were universally decided that Saturday should be the half-holiday, would not that distribute the trade more into the suburbs and more into the country?—More into the suburban towns.

42. I am looking at it now from your point of view of the whole population. Would the tendency be that the working-classes would have to pay more for their goods? Is it not a fact that large returns tend to keep prices down?—Yes.

43. And if you did not get your Saturday trade you could not sell so cheap, and the tendency would be that the working-classes would have to pay more?—Yes; and principally those who come into town from the country. People coming into the towns tends to keep the country prices down and more fair than they would be if it was compulsory for people to come in on other days. The tendency would then be to get a little more profit in the country.

44. *Mr. Ell.*] With regard to the overtime provision, Mr. Wardell, you speak for the assistants themselves, and you think that the assistants do not want this provision?—I understand that there has been some agitation on the subject in Wellington; but what we ask is that it should be left to the Arbitration Court. That Court considers special matters connected with each trade and makes its award accordingly; and we say that it should be left to the Arbitration Court award. For instance, ironmongers require a long time overtime when they are taking stock, whereas grocers require it at Christmas-time, and under the award we do not pay for that overtime. I think the Arbitration Court should make the award in the future as it has done in the past.

45. You argue that if the assistants were granted this overtime they would lose other privileges and concessions which they now have?—I think that is so.

46. And that it would be likely to be better for the masters if the overtime were paid for and the present privileges and concessions to assistants were done away with?—I think that as a rule it is absolutely necessary that there should be some give-and-take, and that hard-and-fast rules are not an advantage, but that it should be left to the Arbitration Court to fix these matters. I understand that the drapers' assistants, too, are anxious that this should not be brought about because they also would lose some of the concessions which they now get.

47. With regard to hotel-bars you think that they should be brought into line with other trades?—I am not so sure if the half-holiday were on Wednesday, but if the shops have to close on Saturdays then the men will be driven into the hotel-bars. I do not think I should say anything about it if the holiday were on Wednesday. The two things are very different. If the half-holiday is to be on Saturday this closing of hotel-bars is of importance, but if the half-holiday were on Wednesday it would not be of so much importance.

48. You argue that you see no reason why fishmongers, fruiterers, and those with perishable goods should be exempted on Saturday?—If you are going to say, "You must have a half-holiday on that day," then I say there should be no exemptions, but if it is a matter of arrangement, then you can arrange the time most suitable for everybody.

49. You prefer leaving it in the hands of the local authority?—No; these local authorities are cropping up on every occasion. What we should like to see is that Wednesday should be made the half-holiday, with a provision that those who wish to keep open on that day and close on Saturday can do so.

50. *Mr. Aitken.*] The Arbitration Court have given you an award?—Yes; but that award would not apply to all shopkeepers. There are many who do not come under that award. We do not object to the other parts of the Bill, fixing the hours and so on; but we say that where there has been an award by the Arbitration Court that award should remain. It would be much better if the Wednesday were fixed for the half-holiday, for at present there are shops closing on almost every day of the week.

51. Is it not the small man who keeps open late?—Yes.

52. Are you not trying to crush the small man?—No; I would give the small man fair play, but it is he who is trying to crush us.

53. You say that a change was made in Dunedin some years ago, but that the working-people were glad to return to the old system?—Yes.

54. Could not the matter be settled by having a referendum in the district?—There is this objection to that course: that it is very difficult to get people to go and vote on a small question like this.

55. The interested people would turn up and vote, would they not?—Is it a question that it is worth while taking a vote upon? Storekeepers are very much interested, because it is a matter of “£ s. d.” with them; and if you went round among the people with two petitions they might sign one or the other, but if you ask them to go away to some distant place and vote they will not do it.

56. If a certain day, say, Saturday, were fixed for closing, do you think that the people would consume less tea and sugar and other necessaries of life?—Of course, we do not know how the thing would work if it were made general. We closed in Dunedin for nearly twelve months—not only six or eight months, as Mr. Miller said—and the people were very glad to go back to the old hours.

57. Did the people purchase less butter and tea and sugar when you closed on the Saturday afternoon?—I cannot say that they did; but instead of a certain number of people coming in from Port Chalmers and Waikouaiti and other country places they did not come.

58. Then, it is a question of the Saturday closing driving a certain amount of business out of the town?—That is so; but, I ask, is Parliament justified in interfering with the ordinary flow of business?

59. Then, really your objection is a trade objection, because if the business was leaving your shop it was going to another?—That is so. There is no doubt about that.

60. *Mr. Tanner.*] With regard to this experiment of closing in Dunedin for about twelve months, I would call attention to the fact that Mr. Wardell said the closing took place when the agitation began, and Mr. McFarlane said that customers asked travellers whether they closed on Saturday, and, if not, they would go elsewhere. Does not that show that there is a popular desire for Saturday closing?—Yes.

61. Then the shops were forced into it by popular feeling?—Yes.

62. You say that when the experiment ceased the working-people were satisfied to go back to the old hours?—There was a feeling of sentiment that it was desirable that there should be closing for the half-holiday on Saturday, but we all agreed that it did not work well for either the shopkeepers or the public.

63. Was that experiment general?—No.

64. It was a limited experiment?—Yes.

65. *Mr. Kirkbride.*] Has the present system of closing given satisfaction?—Yes.

66. Has there been any alteration on the part of the local bodies?—No.

67. You, as shopkeepers, have been satisfied with the fixing of the half-holiday by the local body?—Yes.

68. You wish that on other days all shops should have to close at 6 o'clock?—Yes; we think that is only fair when there are so many restrictions placed upon us. We are at present obliged to work not more than fifty-two hours a week, and we do not see why other shops should be allowed to keep longer hours.

Mr. Miller: I would ask why should not the small shopkeepers close at 6 o'clock? If you look at the merchants' books you will find that a number of these small shopkeepers do not pay 20s. in the pound. Why should we be compelled to close at 6 o'clock when they can keep open till 9 or 10, as they do in Dunedin? Some of them are in the hands of the merchants, and are only carrying on for a short time, and then they give up and close their doors.

Mr. Kirkbride: I asked my question because I know that there are many small shops in Auckland where poor women can do their trade at night, and it appears to me unwise to compel these shops to close at an early hour. Another question I would ask you is: do you recognise that it is one of the pleasures of the half-holiday that a working-man and his wife can go shopping together?

Mr. Miller: Yes.

69. *The Chairman.*] I understand the deputation to say they would be in favour of a compulsory half-holiday by Act of Parliament if that half-holiday were fixed for Wednesday or Thursday?—Yes.

70. I understand also that, in answer to Mr. Ell, the deputation are quite clear that, while they are opposed to Saturday being fixed as the half-holiday, they would be quite satisfied to leave the question to be determined by the voice of the people in the specified district?—You know what a difficulty there is in getting a vote of the people in such a case.

71. But if we could get over that difficulty?—Then we should have no objection to the people voting.

72. *Mr. Aitken.*] The deputation have said that they would like to see all shops closed at 6 o'clock on four days in the week, and that there should be a universal closing on the half-holiday; but under the present Act the shopkeeper who does not employ an assistant can close on any day. Would not that be taking away one of their privileges?—That is a matter for the Inspector to decide. We know that at present there are many shops which keep open at the north end when we have to close at 6 o'clock.

73. Is not your contention carried on on the same principle of selfishness that has characterized your other arguments?—Well, I suppose it is a system of selfishness all through. We employ assistants, and have to pay them. If a man has been working during the day, and when he goes home helps his wife to keep the shop open until all hours, is he not to be considered an assistant? I do not think we are the only ones who show selfishness in the matter.

FRIDAY, 14TH AUGUST, 1903.

Mrs. JACOBSEN in attendance and examined. (No. 16.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You desired to make some statement to the Committee with regard to the Shops and Offices Bill which we are now considering. Will you kindly state to the Committee

what you wish to say?—I should like to say that if you are going to make all shops close at 6 o'clock it will simply mean that some of us will have to close altogether.

2. Why?—Because the people in Newtown do most of their shopping after 6 o'clock, and if we have to close at that hour they will go to town in the daytime, and as they would have a better choice in the big shops we should lose a very large amount of trade. That is the only objection I have with regard to the provision for closing at 6 o'clock. I should be only too pleased if we could close at 6 o'clock, for no one would enjoy the evening's rest after the day's work more than I would.

3. You have a small shop?—Yes; and I have a family to support.

4. *Mr. Colvin.*] In what business are you?—In the drapery business.

5. And you think that if you were compelled to close at 6 o'clock you would have to give up business?—I am sure it would ruin my business. I know the business very well, and I may tell you that my principal trade is done between 7 and half-past 8 o'clock in the evening. I do more business then than I do during the whole of the day.

6. How would a half-holiday on Saturday affect your business?—At first, no doubt, I should feel it, but eventually it would remedy itself, because if we were allowed to keep open in the evening on five days in the week people would do their business then, and it would be better for us.

7. Do you manage all the business yourself?—No; I have an assistant. I have spent a lot of money in establishing my business, and it would simply ruin me if you compelled me to close at 6 o'clock.

8. *Mr. Barber.*] How long have you been in business?—Ten years next October.

9. Have you got any statement showing the receipts at night as compared with those in the daytime?—No; I had not thought of making out such a statement, but I can assure you that I do far the greater part of my business in the evening. Some people do come in the daytime, but as a rule those who can do so go into town to the big shops where they can get a greater variety, and the small shopkeepers suffer. I know that I should suffer if I had to close at 6 o'clock.

Mr. W. J. LANKSHEAR in attendance and examined. (No. 16A.)

Mr. W. J. Lankshear: I represent the large employers on Lambton Quay, Wellington—Kirkcaldie and Stains, Whitcombe and Tombs, and others. I may say that Mr. Kirkcaldie would have been present to give evidence, but pressure of business prevented him. Those whom I represent are strongly in favour of the Saturday closing. As it is we are obliged to have some of our employees back on the Wednesday, although our places of business are closed, and the employer has to remain at his office both on Saturday and Wednesday. We contend that if Saturday afternoon is made compulsory it will be a great advantage to both the employees and the employers. We freely admit that the Saturday closing may cause some inconvenience and disarrangement of business at first, but we say that it will cause no loss to persons in business, and any inconvenience will soon be overcome.

Mr. GEORGE MEE in attendance and examined. (No. 17.)

10. *The Chairman.*] You desire to make a statement with regard to the Bill which we are now considering. Will you please make any statement you wish, and the Committee will be pleased to hear you?—Mr. Chairman, I may say that I am a chemist and druggist carrying on business on Lambton Quay. I have been in business in Wellington for over twenty years, and have been in business in other parts of New Zealand for another twenty years. My staff consists of myself, three assistants, and two errand-boys. The clauses of this Bill seem to me very peculiar. Under the present Act we close compulsorily on Wednesday, but are allowed to open for two hours on that evening. The result is that we are able to meet the wishes of the public in cases of emergency. The fact, however, is that under the strict interpretation of the Act nobody but the master of the shop is allowed to be there during those hours; but we have a sensible Inspector here, and he allows us to keep our assistants during those two hours. In the proposed Bill there is a special provision with respect to chemists. I allude to clause 8, subsection (e), which provides, "In the case of a chemist's shop, for the supply of medicines and surgical appliances certified by a duly qualified medical practitioner to be urgently required." Under that provision we are only allowed to supply those requirements which are certified by a doctor; but, as a matter of fact, all chemists have hundreds of requirements, which they have to supply in those hours, and which are not certified to by any doctor. There are not more than 50 per cent. of the required remedies which are certified by a medical practitioner. After the shop is shut up somebody has to be there to meet these requirements, which are certified to by a medical practitioner; but if a person comes in with a cut finger, or something of that sort, we are not to be allowed to attend to him without a certificate from a medical practitioner. Further than that, some years ago we made objection to this provision for closing, and then we were relegated to the class of fruiterers, fishmongers, and confectioners, and we were allowed to keep open provided we gave our assistant a holiday on some other day. That worked very well, but it seems to me very curious that while these fishmongers and fruiterers may keep open without any restriction, we chemists and druggists cannot supply what is absolutely required without a certificate from a medical practitioner. I cannot understand how that clause came into the Act in the form in which it stands. Going back a little and referring to clause 6 subsection (f), we find that it provides "No premium in respect of the employment of any shop-assistant"—and that includes apprentices—"shall be paid to or received by the occupier, whether such premium is paid by the shop-assistant employed or by some other person; and if the occupier commits any breach of the provisions of this subsection he shall be liable to a fine not exceeding ten pounds." That is to say, that in my business we cannot take any premium with an apprentice. It seems to me that the result would be that we should have to get our assistants from some other place; bring them in from the other colonies, for the simple reason that no chemist would be bothered with apprentices if he could help it. Ours might almost be called a profession, and it has always been the practice of the trade for people to pay a premium

for an apprentice entering it. It is, of course, a matter of opinion, but I can say that no one would be bothered with apprentices without a premium. We have to take a youth and educate him for his business, and he is of very little use to us. With regard to the hours of labour, our hours, at times when it is necessary, are longer than are provided for, but my assistants do not work altogether more than fifty-two hours a week. In cases of emergency one of them may have to work more than ten hours on some day, but then he gets off on another day. The provision for closing at 6 o'clock would be very inconvenient for the public. With regard to the Saturday half-holiday, that is a matter which is very immaterial to us. That is all I wish to say, but I shall be glad to answer any questions.

11. *Mr. Tanner.*] Do you think that the present restrictions on the trade are such as to create friction and inconvenience?—They do not here, because we have a sensible Inspector, and he does not insist upon a strict interpretation of the law; but a friend of mine in Auckland tells me that they are very much annoyed by the restriction there. The Inspector there reads the law that there shall be no assistant in the shop on the Saturday afternoon, and the masters have to do the work themselves.

12. Are you aware that apprentices were entirely exempted from the provisions of the Shops and Shop-assistants Act?—That is so. We were classed with fruiterers, fishmongers, and so on, and so were excluded from the provisions of the Act.

13. And afterwards, on petition to this House, they were included?—Yes. For my own part I think the work during the two hours in the evening would be too much for one hand. I, myself, have often to go down and help. My son may be in the office or one assistant, and they find the work so pressing that they ring me up, and I have to go down and assist.

14. *Mr. Aitken.*] I understand that one of the points you object to is that on the half-holiday you are only allowed to serve prescriptions made up by a doctor?—Yes.

15. Your contention is that that is going to throw the business into the hands of the profession?—Oh, no; that is not the objection. I am thinking of the convenience to the public.

16. I myself think, and the Committee may think, that if the convenience of the public is to be considered in the matter you should never close; that you should keep open night and day. You gave the instance of a boy coming in with a cut finger, and that a chemist would not be able to attend to it. Do I understand you to mean that that would throw it into the hands of the profession?—I do not think that chemists are entitled to perform these small operations. No doubt the public could go to a doctor, but the fees are so prohibitive that they will come to the chemists. There is no doubt that a chemist who performs these small surgical operations is taking a great responsibility.

17. What percentage of the medical men, in this town, for instance, do their own dispensing?—Very few.

18. *Mr. Colvin.*] You are in favour of apprentices paying a premium?—Personally speaking, I have not taken an apprentice on for years, because they are more trouble than profit. If it were not that a premium is allowed, I do not think that any chemist would take an apprentice. The result would be that they would get assistants from other places, and there would be an influx from Australia.

19. How long would it be before an apprentice would be useful?—Well, you could employ him as a boy in the shop, but you could not trust him to make up a prescription until after three years' apprenticeship.

20. *Mr. Bedford.*] What amount is paid as premium?—As much as £100 has been paid in some instances, but the usual thing is about £50. I only take the premium as an earnest of goodwill. I have had two apprentices, one of whom has been with me for over twenty-five years. I got £50 premium with him, and gave him 10s. a week to start with.

21. *Mr. Ell.*] With regard to this premium, you say that if you did not get £50 premium you would not take an apprentice?—I would not.

22. And you pay them about 10s. a week?—Ten shillings to begin with, and then increase it to 15s., and up to £1 5s. a week.

23. You are aware of the provisions of the Factory Act?—Yes.

24. And of the wages under that Act?—Yes.

25. Do you not think they would be in a much worse position if you paid simply the legal wages?—It depends upon the class of boy. Under the Pharmacy Act we have to get boys of superior education.

26. You are an employer, and you take the boy who is well educated and fit for the work. Is it not so?—Yes.

27. You would not be in a worse position financially under this Bill?—I should be in a much worse position. If I get £50 premium with a boy, it virtually pays his wages for the first two years. You can afford to pay him a good wage, whereas if there is no premium, you will only give him 5s. or 7s. 6d. a week, and then he does not think he is properly paid.

28. You are aware that it does not hinder them doing their work with a good heart?—I think their heart is more in the football-field than in their work.

29. Would not the demand of a premium place this calling beyond the reach of very poor people?—Yes, that is very likely.

30. And would not the effect of removing that premium place them on a better footing?—Yes, if sufficiently educated.

31. *Mr. Sidey.*] I understand that you are representing other persons in the same profession?—No; I am entirely "on my own," although I am president of the Pharmacy Board of New Zealand.

32. Have they not had a meeting to consider this question?—Not that I am aware of. By the way, I think they had, and they thought it better to leave the matter alone.

33. I understand you are in favour of the Saturday half-holiday?—Yes.

34. What volume of trade do you do on Saturdays?—Very little more than on other days. The fact of the matter is that we have now two broken days in the week, and if there were Saturday closing we should only have one. On Wednesday we have to close, and on Saturday I allow two

assistants to go away because they may have to work on Sunday. We close now altogether on the Wednesday at one o'clock, but under this Bill we should have to pay an assistant to be in the shop on the Saturday afternoon to attend to prescriptions which might come in from doctors.

35. Do you think it would be well to close altogether?—No doubt. I think, if we gave our assistants a holiday on another day, we should be entitled to open on the half-holiday.

36. What exemption do you want with regard to closing on Saturday?—We should be allowed to open for two hours in the evening, besides being able to attend to special cases of urgency.

37. Is it not the case that some chemists open and that others do not?—No; not in town, at all events.

38. I gather from your answers to questions asked that your chief objection is in regard to the taking of apprentices without a premium?—I think the fact of not being able to take a premium would prevent men from giving their apprentices a proper insight into the business. They would not be bothered with apprentices. Some small men might, but then, they could not teach their apprentices the business properly.

Mr. C. P. SKERRETT in attendance and examined. (No. 18.)

39. *The Chairman.*] I understand, Mr. Skerrett, you would like to say something with regard to the Shops and Offices Bill. Will you be so good as to make any statement you desire?—Mr. Chairman, I represent the New Zealand Law Society, which practically represents the profession throughout the whole of New Zealand. I am here to ask you to consider the advisability of exempting solicitors' clerks from the operation of the Bill. In this matter the society is not so much concerned with its own interests as with the interests of the clerks. Solicitors' clerks do not desire to be brought under the operation of the Bill. There is a very strong feeling amongst them that it would be inimical to their interest that they should be brought under its provisions. There was a petition on the subject presented to the House some years ago, to which I would ask the Committee to refer, as showing what is their feeling on the subject. I can assure the Committee that there is a very strong feeling amongst the clerks upon the subject, and I can produce evidence from them that it is so. I have abstained from doing so because I know that your time is very much occupied, and I have not wished to trespass too much upon it. One thing must be patent to the Committee, and that is that the relationship between a solicitor and his clerks is not in any sense that of the ordinary employer and his employees. In our profession the employee of to-day may be the employer of to-morrow. In the old times there were two degrees of solicitors' clerks. There was the ordinary clerk and there was the articled clerk. Now-a-days it is not uncommon for every clerk in a solicitor's office, from the boy to the highest grade, to study so as to qualify himself to enter the profession. I may say that in my office for years past every clerk, from the boy who has just entered to the senior, is studying to qualify for the profession. In many offices you will find three and four and five clerks away at the same time undergoing examinations or otherwise taking steps to enter the profession, and there is no objection on the part of those who employ them; but if you lay down hard-and-fast rules, as is proposed by this Bill, you may be sure that a bad feeling will arise, and that the friendly feeling which has hitherto existed between the solicitor and his clerks will cease. As to the compulsory half-holiday, I think that any Wellington member of the Committee will admit that solicitors' clerks have ample holidays as it is. Mr. Harrison, secretary to the Law Society, has prepared a return which shows that they get thirty holidays in the year. With regard to overtime, I desire to say that very little overtime is done by lawyers' clerks, and they are paid for it. There is, however, this to be said: that there are many occasions on which both the lawyer and his clerks have to work overtime. For instance, witnesses often come down from the country on the evening of the day before a case has to come on in the Court, and then both the lawyer and a clerk or two must be present in order to ascertain what a witness may have to say with regard to the case. And then again, a lawyer may have to be in Court all day, and other matters have to be put off until after five o'clock or till the evening, and they have to be attended to. There are other things which I might mention, but I do not think it is necessary to trouble you with them just now. But of this I am quite certain: that there is no desire on the part of the clerks to be included under the provisions of this Bill, and I can assure the Committee that it would lead to great friction. I should think the head of the Labour Department would be ready to confine the provisions of the Bill to those whom it will more immediately concern. I can only repeat that I have not brought any witnesses to support my statements, because I did not want to trespass too much on the time of the Committee; but if any question arises in the mind of the Committee as to the desire of the solicitors' clerks not to be included in the Bill, I shall be ready to call any witnesses the Committee wishes to hear. That is all I desire to say, and I shall be happy to answer any questions the Committee wish to put to me.

40. *Mr. Aitken.*] You represent the Law Society of New Zealand, and not only the Law Society of Wellington?—Yes.

41. *Mr. Barber.*] You do not indicate how we are to alter the Bill so as to meet the objections you have raised. Do you propose to strike out the clauses referring to offices?—I ask you to put solicitors' offices into the exemptions.

42. *Mr. Ell.*] I understand Mr. Skerrett to say that his objection is from the employers?—No; from the employees.

43. You state it would be very inconvenient to the employers?—I really do not think the Bill would affect the employers as much as it would affect the employees. The objection comes very much from the clerks themselves. I can assure you that their objection was entirely voluntary, and it is at their instance that the Law Society raises the objection.

44. As to being in Court, will they have to do the work afterwards?—As a rule that class of work is done by the principal and not by a clerk.

45. Then, it would not affect the clerks?—Of course, sometimes it might.

46. Then, it is an employer's objection?—Perhaps it would be fairer to say that the objection comes both from the employers and the employees. I desire to say that the New Zealand Law Society represents the wishes of the employees as well as of the employers.

47. You are aware that this Bill has been before the whole colony for several weeks?—I know very little about the matter except what Mr. Harrison has told me. I understand that there was a petition presented by solicitors' clerks to the House on a previous occasion.

48. The Bill is well known to them, and yet they have not come here to protest against it?—The only reason why they are not here is that I desired to save the time of the Committee as much as possible. It is quite a fallacy to suppose that the New Zealand Law Society is making this objection in the interests of the employers. It affects the interests of the clerks and of the public as well.

49. But the clerks should come?—I shall be very happy to tell them to come.

50. *Mr. Colvin.*] Do you not think that the argument which you bring forward on behalf of lawyers' clerks would apply to all other clerks?—No; clerks in a lawyer's office are in a different position from the majority of that class who are referred to in this Bill. You constantly find them devoting a substantial portion of their time to what is purely educational work. They apply every spare moment to this educational work, and that is why there is a difference between the relationship of a lawyer with his clerk and the ordinary relationship between an employer and his clerk.

51. Is not that a better reason for arguing that if they had a half-holiday they would be able to devote more time to this educational work?—They get half-holidays enough as it is. I may say that they take up much of their employers' time now in educating themselves, and they get their half-holiday very frequently, and why you should impose these legislative restrictions I cannot understand. Their effect will only be to create unpleasantness between the lawyer and his clerks.

52. *Mr. Aitken.*] It would disturb the good feeling which now exists between the employer and his employees?—I am quite sure of that. The Act, I am certain, would be practically a dead-letter, until some day there might be an annoying prosecution, and the result would be that there would be a tendency in the minds of the lawyers to restrict the privileges which they now grant to their clerks.

53. *Mr. Ell.*] You ask that the employees shall not come under the provisions of this Act?—Yes.

54. Are you aware that they come under the provisions of the Acts of 1894 and 1896?—I was not aware of it, I must confess.

55. And there has been no break in the relationship of employer and employee in consequence?—If they are under the provisions of those Acts, then the Acts have not been enforced.

56. There would be no objection to continuing under the existing law?—No.

57. *The Chairman.*] So long as it is not enforced?—Perhaps.

58. *Mr. Ell.*] Is it not a necessity that sanitary rules should be carried out?—Yes.

59. And that there should be no close confinement?—The lawyer's clerk works about six hours and a half a day, so that there is not much close confinement in his case.

60. *Mr. Laurensen.*] You will admit that as a rule laws are made for bad men and not for good and liberal men. You will admit also that there are employers who insist on their employees coming back at all hours?—I have never known that done here. I was a lawyer's clerk myself, and my contention is solely confined to solicitor's offices, because of the fact that the position of employer and employee frequently changes. I can point out many cases in Wellington where the employee has developed into the employer.

61. This Bill fixes the maximum hours of work, and you contend that there are many occasions on which a clerk would have to go back to work at night?—Yes.

62. You work on an average twenty-five days a month. Under this Act there is a provision that a young man can be brought back to work one night out of three. That, surely, is ample provision for overtime. If a witness comes in late and a clerk has to take his evidence, is it not ample provision that you should be able to bring him back till ten o'clock one night out of three?—I can only tell you my own experience. A case comes on on Tuesday, and a witness comes in late on the previous evening, and I have to ascertain what evidence he has to give, and perhaps I am not able to leave my office until two o'clock in the morning, and I must have a clerk with me.

63. I suppose you are too merciful an employer to make your clerks work from eight o'clock in the morning till two o'clock next morning?—All I can say is that many clerks would be very glad to do so because of the experience which it would give them. I have a great deal of Court work, and it is good work for the clerks, as it gives them experience. You will find many of them working at educational matters until late at the Supreme Court library.

64. Would you be in favour of regulating the hours of offices generally?—I could not say anything about that.

65. I know of merchants' offices in Christchurch which are kept working till eleven o'clock at night and later, and where the employees are brought back constantly. Should not that be regulated?—I have no sympathy with that.

66. *The Chairman.*] With regard to these article clerks, do they pay a premium?—No; or if it is done at all it is a very rare case. I have been in practice in Wellington for nearly twenty years, and I have never received a premium.

67. I am very pleased to hear that. Is there still a law which limits the number of article clerks?—No, sir; there never has been.

68. There was a law in force in England to that effect?—Possibly, sir; but it has not been in force in New Zealand. No doubt, so far as the master was concerned, he was supposed to educate his pupil; but the only advantage he had was the office experience. As a matter of fact, you will find every clerk in a lawyer's office now striving to become a member of the profession.

69. *Mr. Colvin.*] Is it not the same in every employment in New Zealand, that the employee of to-day may be the employer of to-morrow, equally as well as in the legal profession?—To some extent that may be quite correct, but the advantage in connection with the profession is that you do not require capital to start. It is only experience and education that you have to rely upon, and that is where this class of employee is differentiated from others.

70. But in other businesses in life, if a young fellow makes his way and has no examination

to pass, why should not the employee of to-day be the employer of to-morrow, and have the same chance as if he were in a lawyer's office?—There does not seem to be the same certainty of getting on.

Mr. DAWSON, Mr. PARADISE, and Mr. MORTON in attendance. (Nos. 19, 20, and 21.)

The Chairman: I understand that you represent the shop-assistants in Wellington, and desire to make a statement to this Committee in connection with the Bill which we have now under consideration. Do you represent the whole of the shop-assistants of Wellington?

Mr. Dawson: Yes. At a meeting of the shop-assistants at the Exchange Hall to consider this Bill a resolution was carried unanimously in favour of the compulsory half-holiday, and we were appointed a deputation to wait upon you and urge the favourable consideration of that provision. The half-holiday was given for the benefit of the assistants, and we think, everything else being equal, it is only fair we should have a voice in deciding on what day shall be the half-holiday. I say "everything else being equal" upon two important matters: that is to say, the convenience of the general public and how it will affect those who give the half-holiday—that is, the shopkeepers. I ask you to believe that we are not selfish in this matter. We consider that our employers' interests are the same as our own. We may some day be shopkeepers ourselves, and, although we might have to commence in a small way, we should be the last to advocate legislation which would be likely to interfere with our future. With regard to the convenience of the general public, we think that you have provided against any inconvenience to the public by the provisions of this Bill. Then, as to the question of how it would affect the small shopkeepers, we think that a late night on some other night in the week would answer all purposes. Of course, the small shopkeepers say that they do as much business on a Saturday night as they do during a whole day on any other day in the week, and I do not blame them for sticking up for the Saturday-evening business. I say they will not lose this business, because we should provide that they could keep open late on Friday night, and that would help them to do the business they would lose by closing on Saturday. Again, it has always been said—and it is one of the greatest factors in this Bill—that Saturday is essentially the shopping-day for the working-man, because he is paid at 1 o'clock on Saturday. I am bold enough to say that Saturday is the worst day on which to pay him. Furthermore, I do not think that half the working-men are paid at 1 o'clock on Saturday. The Harbour Board and the shipping offices do not pay their men on Saturday, and there are many of the other big employers who do not pay their employees on Saturday, while those who do would be quite ready to change their day of paying. As regards the men who get their pay on Saturday, I have seen some of them who leave their work at 1 o'clock on Saturday but who do not reach their homes within a reasonable time, and when they do get home they are *minus* a large proportion of their wages. If they were paid on Friday I say that the majority of working-men have such a regard for the proper state of things that they would go back to their work, and their wives would benefit, and no harm would be done to any one. The same amount of business would be done, and it is only a question of a certain amount of business taking a different channel. Again, it has been said that this would interfere with people coming in from the country to do their shopping. Well, "country" is a big word. If you mean people coming from twenty-five miles or further from the town, then I say the argument is altogether wrong. Those who come in from that distance do their work earlier in the week. I have been in this town for some sixteen years, and I can say that we have found Wednesday to be the best day for the country people as a whole. Another point is that the Wednesday half-holiday certainly dislocates business as a whole. There are many people who are put to inconvenience by the Wednesday half-holiday. It is, for instance, a great inconvenience to the shipping. I believe the shipping people feel it very much. There is only one thing, as far as I can say at present, in which this Bill does not meet with favourable consideration generally. I would ask you therefore to put a clause in the Bill to enable those who are interested in the half-holiday to say on which day it shall be held—that is to say, to have a voice in saying on what day it shall be held. It has been said that the shop-assistants do not want the Saturday half-holiday. I say we do desire it, and it is only fair that we should have a voice in saying on what day that half-holiday shall be held.

Mr. Paradise: I believe, gentlemen, that I have been asked to attend this Committee because I have gone through the experience of both the Saturday half-holiday and the Wednesday half-holiday. To put the matter in a concrete form, I challenged my present employer to allow me to take an account of the effect on the business of closing on the Wednesday afternoon for the two years previous between the hours of 1 and 6 o'clock, and between the hours of 1 and 9 o'clock on Saturday, and I agreed that if the total came to a large amount I would abide by the result. It showed that there was more business done on the Wednesday. Our business is a composite business. We have about a hundred hands employed, and half of the place is closed on Saturday by law, and the consequence is that it has caused great inconvenience if we are dealing with magazines from the Home-country. Some three weeks ago these magazines arrived on a Saturday, and we could not distribute them among the small shops because the other half of the establishment was closed, while other persons in the same business in the town were able to distribute theirs. I think that is a matter which should argue in favour of there being one day fixed for the half-holiday. Another point of great importance is this: When I was in the Old Country I used to visit different towns, and I found that there was very little business done on any other day except market-day. If Monday was the market-day it was the busy day, while Saturday was much the same as any other day in the week. I say that if this Saturday half-holiday were given to us, although it might dislocate business to a certain extent at the start for perhaps a twelvemonth, I am sure that the volume of business would not be interfered with. The employers would very soon adapt themselves to the change, and the employees could be paid on some other day. The shop-assistants form a far larger proportion of the population than the shopkeepers. Here in Wellington there are about two thousand shop-assistants, and there are certainly not two thousand shopkeepers.

Another point is with regard to the small shopkeepers. Now, I consider that in framing laws the principle should be the greatest good to the greatest number; and if we had a late night on Friday and closed at 1 o'clock on Saturday the little shops, especially in the suburbs, would not be injuriously affected; rather the other way. They would do as much business as they were doing now, and it would not affect the larger shops in the centre of the town. These are the only points on which I wish to address you.

Mr. Morton: I am a draper's assistant. Most of the ground has been covered by those who have already spoken on this question. I would only add that this Bill has been brought in for the benefit of shop-assistants, and I do not think that there is the least opposition to it from any shop-assistant—certainly not in Wellington. Although some few may have been afraid to sign the requisition, still, I am certain that nine-tenths of the shop-assistants here are in favour of the Bill, and I believe it is the same in other places. With regard to the question of payment for overtime, we do not think that that should be enforced. We think it would be detrimental to the interests of assistants. At the present time they get certain advantages. For instance, they are paid all the year round, whether they are ill or not, and they have other privileges which they would lose if the payment of overtime was enforced. The majority of them think that a permanent salary is better than overtime payment.

71. *Mr. Tanner.*] The first speaker (Mr. Dawson) asked that in determining the matter the shop employees should have a vote as well as the shopkeepers?—Yes.

72. Would you object to a poll being taken of the whole district—say, take the electoral roll, and so decide the question? You will admit that customers have some interest in the matter?—I would prefer that to the present system, but I think it should be left between the assistants and the shopkeepers. You could take round a requisition in favour of closing and get it signed, and so determine the matter of closing.

73. Supposing you took a poll as at an election with ballot-boxes and ballot-papers?—Yes; we should be satisfied with that.

74. *Mr. Bollard.*] You stated in your evidence that if Friday were the late night and shops kept open till 9 or 10 o'clock, and working-men were paid at 1 o'clock on Friday they would do their shopping on that day instead of Saturday?—Yes.

75. Would that be as convenient to a working-man and his wife?—I think it would. I honestly think so.

76. What business are you in?—I am a draper's assistant.

77. *Mr. Colvin.*] I should think that a late Friday night would not be as suitable to these people, for this reason: that the man has to get up early next morning to go to his work, and it would not be so convenient to him to be shopping till 9 or 10 o'clock on Friday night as it would be on the Saturday, because he can sleep in next morning. But, I ask you, how many working-men go shopping with their wives?—Well, you are making these provisions to enable him to go shopping with his wife, but you do not give me five minutes to do my shopping.

78. You have all the advantages of shopping, because you live in the town, and I do not think any employer would stop you going to shop?—I think they would.

79. You say that if a person gets his pay on Saturday at 1 o'clock he does not go home to his family until later. Do you not think that if that man got his pay at 1 o'clock on Friday he would be likely to lose a half-day that day and not be able to go to work on Saturday morning?—I know the circumstances of which I am speaking, and I am proud to say that nearly every working-man has a sense of regard for his billet. When he knows he has to work he provides for it and is ready to do it, but if he gets off on the Saturday afternoon he knows that he has until Monday before he has to go to work again.

80. Take the man who is given to drink. As soon as he gets his money the first thing he does is to go and have a glass of beer. He gets in with three or four others and they go to a publichouse and do not get away from there till late. I do not mean men like myself who can take a drop or leave it alone, but the man who has got the habit and does not go home: is that not the case?—I know that many of these men have their lunch supplied to them at a certain place at 1 o'clock. They have a glass of beer and go back to their work, but if they know that they have till Monday without having to work they do not go home until late. You will find that if they are paid at 1 o'clock on Saturday they will not get home till 7 or 8 or 9 o'clock.

81. He cannot resist the temptation on Saturday, but during the week the wife gives him sixpence or a shilling and then he goes back to his work, but if he is paid at 1 o'clock on Friday will he not do the same as he now does on Saturday?—I have too much respect for working-men to think that if they have work to do they will not provide for it.

82. Would you be willing to take a vote of the district?—What I say is that we should have a voice in the matter. I only agree to taking a poll of the district because it has been reported here in Wellington that the employees are not in favour of the half-holiday.

83. *Mr. Bedford.*] You said, I understand, that you represent the feeling of employees generally when you said they do not want overtime payment?—That is so according to the expressions of opinion I have heard. At the meeting at which we were asked to come and represent the employees here the feeling was unanimous.

84. You think it would be to your advantage to have it left as at present?—Yes; because with overtime payment we should be put in the position of ordinary factory-hands. The shop-assistant has to distribute, and not to manufacture, and he thinks he should be in a different position, and that that position should be a settled one.

85. *Mr. Sidey.*] Do I understand that you, gentlemen, are a deputation appointed at a meeting in town?—Yes.

86. How was that meeting called?—It was called by the shop-assistants.

87. Did it include all shop-assistants?—All shop-assistants were invited to attend the meeting on a Wednesday evening.

88. I think you told us there were about two thousand shop-assistants in Wellington: how many out of these attended the meeting?—I really cannot say exactly, but I think there were about two or three hundred.

89. Do you consider that all shop-assistants were represented at that meeting?—Yes.

Mr. Paradise: With regard to that point, I beg to say that a large number who gave us evidence of agreeing with the course we were taking would not attend the meeting because of the fact that they feared their employers. I say deliberately that shop-assistants are the most subservient servants that exist. They cannot form a union, and they are practically at the mercy of the employer.

90. *Mr. Sidey*.] We have been told in this Committee that a certain proportion of the assistants have their holiday while the others are at work. The factories do not do their work at the same time, and one man may have a half-holiday while the others are at work: is that so?—Yes, and it is very inconvenient. In the establishment in which I am engaged the shop closes on Wednesday and the factory closes on Saturday.

Mr. Sidey: Put your own case. You said that you have no time to do your shopping because you are always at work in a shop. If every one has a half-holiday on the same day, will they not all be in the same position?

Mr. Dawson: I suppose they would do the same as I do and would shop in their own time. I merely said that I had not five minutes to do shopping for myself and family. I did not make any complaint.

91. *Mr. Sidey*.] As regards country people, I want to know whether it is not a fact that the great bulk of the trade done in the town on Saturday afternoon by shopkeepers is done by people from the country?—I can only repeat that "country" is a very wide term. If you mean country twenty-five miles and further from Wellington, that argument will not stand, because those people do their shopping earlier in the week and like to stay at home on the Saturday.

92. Can you tell us where the people who do their shopping on Saturday afternoon come from?—Principally from the town itself and the suburbs. There is no doubt that a number come from the adjacent towns.

93. Where will they go to do their shopping if there is no shop open?—I suppose they would do their shopping on some other day; and, besides that, there would be an increased trade in the country.

94. You say the trade would be diverted?—There is no doubt that some of the trade would be diverted, but I do not think that the present shopkeepers will suffer.

95. The shopkeepers are of opinion that it will hurt them: do you not think that if the trade is altered from the present arrangement it will affect them?—The shopkeepers argue that they know what they get now, but that if there is a change they will not know what they will get; but we propose to make up for that by keeping open late on the Friday.

96. What is your position, *Mr. Paradise*?—I am in charge of the book department in Whitcombe and Tombs's.

97. You say that there are two branches in the establishment?—That is so. Our business was taken over from Messrs. Lyon and Blair. *Mr. Blair* introduced the Saturday half-holiday some years ago, and when Whitcombe and Tombs purchased the business they carried it on until they had the new building. Then *Mr. Whitcombe* said that it was opposed to the rules in the establishments at Christchurch and Dunedin, and so we kept open on Saturday. As regards the results, they were very much disappointed, the fact being that the Wednesday sales were better than the Saturday sales.

98. How long has the shop been open on Saturday?—Since 1896. All the booksellers on Lambton Quay had agreed before that to close, with the exception of one man, who said that he would not close, and so they dropped the whole thing.

99. *Mr. Kirkbride*.] I should like *Mr. Dawson* to emphasize his former answer. He holds that the shop-assistants should have a voice in deciding which half-holiday should be taken: would the shop-assistants object to this being decided by all the people on the electoral roll?—That, of course, is an alternative in the event of your not taking a favourable view of what the Bill provides at present. We prefer the Bill, and next, as the Government gives the half-holiday, we say that we should have a voice in determining on what day the half-holiday shall be.

100. You recognise that persons who do the shopping should have some say?—I think the first consideration should be the convenience of the general public.

101. In answer to a question by *Mr. Colvin* as to whether a man would spend his money in a publichouse if paid on Saturday, you appeared to think that if he were paid on Friday the fact of his having to go back to work on that day and on Saturday morning would prevent him spending his money in that way?—I only say, sir, what I know to be a fact. I know certain men who get their pay on Saturday and they spend the afternoon and evening away from their homes, and I say that if those men were paid on Friday and had to go back to work, they have such a regard for their billets that they would do their work on that afternoon and be ready for work on Saturday morning.

102. You are in a bookseller's shop, *Mr. Paradise*?—Yes.

103. You said that when the Saturday half-holiday was taken you did as much business on the Wednesday?—We did more.

104. Could you speak for the shopkeepers who supply the people with food?—I can only speak for my own business.

105. It is a matter of great importance to shopkeepers who supply people with food?—There might be some disarrangement of trade at first, but it would soon adapt itself.

106. Do the shop-assistants object to the small shopkeepers in the suburbs being open late on Saturday night?—I have never heard of any objection.

107. Do you wish those shops to be closed?—I think they would benefit rather than otherwise, because a number of the people who come into town on Saturday would do their business with the small shopkeepers on other days.

108. You do not think these small-shop people would lose by not being able to open on the half-holiday when the working-man and his wife go shopping together?—I think they would rather benefit, because the people who come into town on Saturday would then do their shopping on other days, and particularly on the Friday night.

109. I think, Mr. Morton, you said that nine-tenths of the shop-assistants in Wellington are in favour of the half-holiday?—Yes; I say so from the expressions of opinion I have heard. At our meeting there was no objection to signing a petition in favour of the Bill, and the reason there were not more signatures was because many were afraid to sign lest they should get into trouble with their employers.

110. How did you take this *plébiscite*?—By a petition.

111. And you got nine-tenths of the assistants to agree to it?—Yes.

112. *Mr. Hardy.*] I understand the deputation to represent a meeting held at the Exchange Hall?—Yes.

113. And there were about 10 per cent. of the shop-assistants in the town present?—Yes.

114. How was it that the meeting was so small?—I have already stated that a number of the employees would not attend through fear of their employers. A shop-assistant is in this position: that he has no trade of his own, and if he loses his employment it is a very serious matter for himself and his family. Therefore very many did not attend the meeting.

115. Does the reign of terrorism which exists in Wellington exist elsewhere?—I think it is common to all towns.

116. Then, the shop-assistants are all afraid of their employers?—Yes, more or less.

117. Is it not possible for you to form a union so as to prevent that sort of thing?—As I have said, the assistants are afraid to form a union, because they know what would be the result.

118. Could there not be a union of employers and employees?—No.

119. Is not one necessary to the other?—Yes.

120. Is there any reason why the employers should not associate themselves with the employees, the one being necessary to the other?—I am not prepared to answer that question. I only know what exists at present.

121. About these small shopkeepers: were they represented at the meeting?—No. It was a meeting of shop-assistants, and many of the small shopkeepers do not employ assistants.

122. How would it be to their interest if they were compelled to close on the half-holiday?—It would be to their interest in this way: that many of those who now come in and spend the whole of Saturday afternoon and evening in town would not come in, but would go to the small shops in the out-districts.

123. Are you, then, in favour of this half-holiday being made universal?—Certainly I am.

124. Should it not apply to a large number of employments, so that they might be able to enjoy their sport at the same time?—Yes, I should like to see it made general.

125. And the hotels should be shut at the same time as the others?—Of course, I am a temperance man, and I should like to see them shut up.

126. Well, I am not a Prohibitionist, and I ask you the question on broad grounds?—I should say they should be shut.

127. So as to give all employees a holiday at the same time?—Yes.

128. *Mr. Barber.*] The question has been asked whether the shop-assistants would be in favour of taking a vote as to the half-holiday. You would make it applicable to the district, but in that case there might be a difficulty, as some would vote for one day and some for another. Would it not be necessary to have the whole thing fixed for the colony?—Yes, it should be universal throughout.

129. With reference to the shopping difficulty, you said there might be a difficulty to the working-man if there was a universal half-holiday; but it is not absolutely necessary that a working-man and his wife should go into the town on the Saturday, and they could do their shopping in the country towns?—Yes.

130. You say the reason why so many of the assistants hesitate to take part in the movement for a half-holiday is that there is no limit to the number of assistants who could be got. It is not like a trade, and if an employer got rid of an assistant he would have no difficulty in filling his place?—You see, our wages are not fixed by law. We now get £2 or £2 10s. a week, and if a man lost his billet he would have to begin again at £1 10s. a week.

131. They are not so independent as those in other employments, and that is the reason why they are afraid to take any steps in this matter?—Yes.

132. Is it not a fact that, with regard to the Wednesday half-holiday, if there is another holiday in the same week the assistants lose the Wednesday half-holiday, while the factory-hands still get it?—Yes, and we are ready to give them that. What we want is the Saturday half-holiday made compulsory.

133. As the law stands at present is it not a fact that if there is a holiday, say, on Thursday, those employed in factories still get the Saturday half-holiday, but the shop-assistants lose their Wednesday half-holiday?—Yes.

134. With regard to shopping on Saturday night, is it not a fact that there is a certain class who will leave their shopping to the last moment?—Yes.

135. If that was prevented they would buy their things at another time?—Yes.

136. *Mr. Ell.*] In answer to Mr. Tanner you, Mr. Dawson, said that you would have no objection to a referendum to the people in the district as to establishing the half-holiday?—I said I would prefer the provision in the Bill.

137. But you have no objection to a referendum?—No.

138. *Mr. Laurensen.*] I think you, Mr. Paradise, were asked whether any fewer books would be sold if Saturday were made a universal half-holiday?—Yes, and I stated more were sold on the Wednesday.

139. And in answer to Mr. Kirkbride, who referred to those who supply food to the people, you did not think it would affect them, or that the people would be inconvenienced?—It would be only for a time; it would adjust itself.

140. I would ask you whether the employees as a class think a half-holiday on Saturday once a fortnight or a half-holiday on Wednesday every week would be the best?—That is a matter of opinion, and I am not prepared to say what the assistants generally would prefer, but, speaking personally, I should prefer the half-holiday on Wednesday every week, but it should be made compulsory. At present we lose it if there is another holiday in the week. When another holiday comes in the week—say, Easter Monday—we lose the Wednesday half-holiday, while the factory-hands get their half-holiday on Saturday all the same.

141. The employees in Christchurch say that they would rather have the Saturday half-holiday once a fortnight than the weekly Wednesday half-holiday?—Of course, Christchurch is in rather an exceptional position. When I was visiting there it seemed to me that the Saturday looked rather like a market-day. There are a large number of persons who drive into the town on that day, and I believe that is the reason.

142. How do you make out that Saturday is the market-day in Christchurch?—I do not know that there is a market-day at any town in this colony; but Christchurch puts me in mind more of towns I have visited in the Old Country, and I think there is more business done in the town on Saturday than there is on any other day in the week.

143. You did not know the fact that the market-day in Christchurch is Wednesday, and not Saturday?—I did not know it.

144. You, Mr. Dawson, say that all the employees are in favour of the Saturday half-holiday?—Yes.

145. Are all the employers against the Saturday half-holiday?—No.

146. Can you say that half of them are for it?—Yes; that is, half of the employers, but not half of the shopkeepers.

147. And, practically speaking, all the employees?—Yes.

148. Speaking from your position as one who is brought much into contact with the public, do you think that the general public would be antagonistic to it?—I have spoken to many of them, and can say that they are in sympathy with it. They consider that Wednesday is a very inconvenient day, and that Saturday would be a far better day on which to have the half-holiday.

149. Do you know on what day wages are paid by the large employers in this city?—I have made inquiries, and find that the Harbour Board, the shipping offices, and many other large employers do not pay the wages on Saturday.

150. When do they pay them?—I do not know.

151. Is it the custom here for the large employers to pay their men on Friday?—I think so.

152. *The Chairman.*] With regard to these workmen who it is said would leave their money in the publichouses if they were paid on the Saturday, are these men very numerous?—Yes; I believe 15 or 20 per cent. of them. I have seen a good many.

153. Well, I have had some little experience with workers outside shop-assistants, and I consider it is a reflection on them to say that fifteen or twenty out of every hundred would spend their money in publichouses on Saturday afternoon?—It is a very difficult thing to say the number, and I can only repeat that I have seen a good many of them, but as to the proportion to the total it is impossible for me to say.

154. If there were five black sheep in every hundred they would be very conspicuous?—Yes.

155. Would you like to say that there are more than 5 per cent. of these working-men who do as you say?—I must adhere to my statement that there are 15 or 20 per cent. of them who do it. I do not wish to cast a reflection on any man.

156. *Rt. Hon. R. J. Seddon.*] Can you say how long these people stay in the publichouses? Or, rather, put it this way: do they simply get a glass of beer before they go home, or is it a general drunk?—I could not say.

157. Can you say how much they spend? Is it a drunk, or is it simply a drink on their way home?—Simply a drink in going home.

158. What would be the percentage of those who stay longer?—The time they would stay would vary.

159. What would be the percentage of those who would go straight home if you closed the publichouses?—I think the greater number of those who visit those places at that time would go home.

160. You do not want to cast a reflection upon the people?—No, sir, I do not want to cast any reflection.

161. The same men would probably do the same thing on Friday, or on any other day on which they were paid?—There would be a difference, because they would have to go back to work. They have not got to work on the Saturday afternoon, and so they can stay longer on that afternoon.

162. Then, your contention is that it would benefit the wives and families if they were paid on the Friday afternoon?—Yes.

163. You allude to those who stop on the Saturday afternoon, but who would have to go back to work on the Friday?—Yes.

164. The next question is with regard to the *plébiscite*. At present the local bodies fix the half-holiday, and you say that is not a fair way of settling it?—That is a matter of opinion.

165. Remove the local bodies from doing it, and then there are two courses open: one is that Parliament should settle it, and the other is to leave it to the people to settle it. There might be

a third way, and that would be to leave it to the employers and employees?—That is my idea; but I would be quite willing to take a general vote of the people if that were not done.

166. Provided the Legislature did not see its way to definitely fix Saturday as the half-holiday a *plébiscite* should be taken by the public?—My reason for making the suggestion was that it has been stated about here that the bulk of the assistants are not in favour of a *plébiscite*. We say that failing our having a voice in settling the matter it should be left to be settled by a *plébiscite*.

167. Coming to the contention that all the shops in town should be closed on Saturday afternoon, and that no places of business should be kept open, would that lead to more being spent by the working-classes than if the shops were kept open?—I do not think so.

168. There are certain classes of business such as barbers' shops, fruiterers, chemists, and so on: should not these be allowed to open on Saturday afternoon?—Yes.

169. And they should be removed from the vote of the people?—I think that the few should suffer for the benefit of the many, and that barbers' shops and the other classes of shops which you have mentioned should be allowed to remain open.

170. You do not think it would interfere with the volume of business done?—The total volume of business done would be the same.

Rt. Hon. R. J. Seddon: I wish to put the same question to Mr. Paradise.

Mr. Paradise: There might be a little unpleasantness at first, but it would very soon come down to the ordinary level. It would right itself in a twelvemonth.

171. If the pay-day was on some other day than Saturday, would that give more of the wages to the working-man's family?—Yes. If a man is at work until 5 o'clock he goes straight home, but if he is paid on the Saturday he knows that he has the whole of the afternoon before him and he takes his time.

Rt. Hon. R. J. Seddon: I would ask you the same question, Mr. Morton.

Mr. Morton: My opinion is that Friday would be the best pay-day, for the reasons stated by Mr. Paradise.

WEDNESDAY, 19TH AUGUST, 1903.

Mr. MACKINLAY, Mr. DICKSON, and Mr. WALKER in attendance. (Nos. 22, 23, and 24.)

The Chairman: I understand you wish to give evidence on the Shops and Offices Bill. If you will be good enough to make a statement one at a time the Committee will be happy to hear you.

Mr. Mackinlay: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—I beg to say that I represent the shop-assistants of Auckland and its suburbs, and have been sent here to place their opinions before the Committee and ask the Committee to recommend the Government to make the Saturday a compulsory half-holiday. It is, in our opinion, an anomaly that a large majority of the business community, banking, shipping, and many wholesale businesses should close on that day without any loss to their business and that shops should not be able to do so. It has been contended that the closing on Saturday would result in loss to the trade and in inconvenience to the public, because as it comes immediately before the Sunday there is greater amount of business done on that day than on any other day in the week, and that it is more likely to be enjoyed by the public, because the next day being Sunday they will feel more at leisure. I wish to say that that has not been the case in Auckland when the rule was to close the shops on the Saturday afternoon. I have with me resolutions which were carried unanimously by a meeting of shop-assistants in Auckland, held on Tuesday, the 28th July, and with the Committee's permission I will read them. They are to this effect: "That the Government be asked to proceed with the resolution making Saturday a compulsory half-holiday, for the following reasons: (1.) That it is already observed by a very large majority of the community. (2.) That, as banking, postal, shipping, and wholesale businesses are closed on Saturday, the observance of different days by different trades results in inconvenience and loss to all. (3.) That the Saturday half-holiday interferes less than any other with the continuity of work. (4.) That coming immediately before the Sunday it is a greater boon than on any other day. (5.) That Sunday is likely to be more rationally enjoyed by those who have not been working until 10 o'clock or past on Saturday." That is all I desire to say at present, but I shall be happy to answer any questions which the Committee may desire to put to me.

Mr. Dickson: On behalf of the shop-assistants we have been sent for the purpose of asking the Government to make Saturday a compulsory half-holiday. I consider it would be a benefit to the employers as well as to the employees. We look upon it that the present Government is desirous of studying the interests of the shop-assistants, and with that object in view has introduced the present Bill. The original Shops and Shop-assistants Bill, which was introduced by the Hon. Mr. Reeves, was intended to make the Saturday half-holiday compulsory. That was the intention of the Government, but the Bill was cut down by the Upper House, and then the Government said it was better to take half a loaf than no bread, and so the Bill was passed in its amended form. We think the assistants should be considered in the matter, and we are quite ready to answer any questions or statements that may be made or have been made with regard to the effect upon employers. We are in no way antagonistic to the employers when we say that we think that Saturday is the best day for closing provided that Friday is made the late night of the week. Friday is the market-day in Auckland. Mr. Bollard and other Auckland members will recollect that it used to be Saturday, but we got it changed to Friday. The country people would come in, stay later to do their shopping, and as far as the horse and market sales are concerned, it would not affect them in the least. We therefore think that Saturday should be the closing-day, and that Friday should be the late night. I shall be happy to answer any questions.

Mr. Walker: I am a shopkeeper, and I am in favour of Saturday being the half-holiday. I may say that this question of the Saturday half-holiday has been agitated in Auckland since 1894, and 339 shopkeepers signed a petition affirming the principle that Saturday should be the

half-holiday. I was requested to support this principle by Queen Street shopkeepers. Then, there are sixteen shopkeepers in Karangahape Road who are in favour of the Saturday half-holiday. They recognise that there is a difficulty, and it is a vexed question, and they think, therefore, that the Government should not make it compulsory, but that it should be left to the people to decide. They think the present law is not satisfactory, inasmuch as at the conference in February the matter might be decided against the shopkeepers. They agree with me that it would be better to leave it to the people. I have facts and figures to prove that when we had the Saturday half-holiday in Auckland there was no loss of trade, and that the extra takings on Friday made up for the loss of Saturday's trade. Some of the small shopkeepers in Karangahape Road urge that if this were carried out they would be ruined. Notwithstanding all these dismal forebodings, I am convinced that if we could keep open late on the Friday we should do as much business as we now do on the Saturday. Personally, I may say that it is very inconvenient to me to have to be there both on Wednesday and Saturday, as, being a small manufacturer, I have to be, and it is also very inconvenient to a great many persons who are similarly situated. There was no loss in trade when we closed on Saturday in 1895. I was the manager of a small shop at that time, and during the seven weeks we closed on Saturday there was no loss in business. I may say also that the law of 1895 was defective, inasmuch as it gave shopkeepers an opportunity to remain open who employed no labour on that day, so that my neighbour on my right was open when I was closed, and my neighbour opposite also. I say that on the whole the takings would be the same if we closed on Saturday and remained open late on Friday. I made a calculation of the takings during the seven weeks that we closed on Saturday in 1895, and compared them with the takings when we closed on Wednesday in 1896—a corresponding period—and found that the former were £109 18s. 2d., and the latter were £113 17s., so that the difference amounted to only £3 18s. 10d. Had my neighbour been closed no loss would have accrued. It is not really a question of whether we take more money or not on Saturdays, but of when we take it. That is my opinion of the matter. Another paper has been given to me which shows conclusively that in the year 1895, when they closed on the Saturday, the takings were £276 more than in 1894. This is conclusive evidence that the Saturday closing is not injurious to the shopkeeper. I myself think the matter should be left to the people to decide, and I am convinced that Saturday closing would not make the slightest difference to the trade done.

1. *Mr. Witheford.*] I would ask you, Mr. Mackinlay, where were you employed?—In the Karangahape Road.

2. You are in favour of the Saturday half-holiday?—Yes.

3. How many do you represent here?—About fifteen hundred people.

4. How would it affect the tradespeople throughout the district?—I think the small shopkeepers are afraid of any change; but I believe, myself, it would tend to increase their business rather than otherwise, because the people in the country would be more inclined to spend their money in their own district than to come into town.

5. How would it affect the working-man: would it be satisfactory to him?—I do not see why it should not be. A great deal has been said about the working-man going to do his shopping with his wife, but my experience is that it is the wives who do the shopping. The men do not shop. It is the women who do all the shopping, and that is the experience of almost every shopkeeper.

6. It has been stated by delegates to this Committee that 15 or 20 per cent. of the men when they get their wages spend them in the publichouses: do you find that that has been the case in Auckland?—Distinctly not. I should be sorry to think that these men had no self-control. The same thing has been said by the opponents to the Saturday closing about the shop-assistants—that they would go and get drunk. My experience is entirely different. In my young days, when I was in the Old Country, when shops were closed at 8 or 9, we had nowhere to go to but a billiard-room or publichouse. But a better class of young men has developed here owing to better social conditions, and their habits and morals are excellent.

7. Are you, Mr. Dickson, employed in the city?—Yes.

8. For how long have you been employed there?—For eighteen years. I have been connected with the early-closing movement for the last eighteen years. In fact, I have letters on me now on this question written as far back as 1894, which show that we did not wish to interfere with the employer: that we thought it our duty to study his interest. We went round and asked the employers if they would agree to stay open late on Friday instead of Saturday, and we pointed out that if they did so they would not suffer.

9. In your opinion, would it be injurious to the city business if the Saturday half-holiday was adopted?—I am rather inclined to think that it would be in favour of the suburbs, because people would not have time to come down to buy on Friday, and they would buy in the shops in their neighbourhood.

10. *Mr. Bollard.*] What is your opinion about the men—and there are a large number of them—who by the nature of their employment knock off work at 12 or 1 o'clock on Saturday? What is your opinion about their position in connection with the closing of shops on that day?—I may say that we have brought down a petition to-day, to which 3,712 signatures are attached, and it is signed not only by shop-assistants but also by ordinary workers in favour of the Saturday half-holiday. They say that they enjoy the Saturday half-holiday and they do not see why the shop-assistants should not enjoy it also. A man cannot take his wife out with him on the Wednesday afternoon, because her children are at school and she cannot leave the house. Then, as far as the shopping goes, most of the men stay at home and let the wives do the shopping. We do a class of business in which women are not personally interested. It is really a man's business, and yet we do more business with women than we do with men. The men think the women are the best judges and they leave it to their wives. A man does not care much what he wears so long as it pleases the wife.

11. Does she buy his boots also?—We do not deal in that class of goods. Mr. Walker could tell you more about that than I can. Another thing I might say is that it is the women who bring their boys to get their clothes.

12. Have you any documentary evidence to put in in support of your statements?—We have a petition in favour of what I am advocating, and the resolutions which have been read to you were passed unanimously by a meeting of the shop-assistants. I may add that the Trades and Labour Council also passed a similar resolution in favour of Saturday closing.

13. Are these petitions to be presented to the House?—Yes. I may say that we got them up in a week. In August, 1894, we sent down a petition with seven thousand and odd signatures in favour of the Saturday half-holiday, and that was on behalf of the shop-assistants and also on behalf of the labouring-classes.

14. I believe that at one time Mr. Fowlds closed on Saturdays?—Yes; for five or six weeks.

15. Why did he give it up?—Because there were exemptions in those days which do not exist in this Bill. It was in consequence of the *Gazette* notice of the exemptions that he gave it up.

16. Did he not find a great falling-off in his returns, and was not that the reason for his returning to the old system?—I believe there was some falling-off, but I was not in his employ then. You must remember that some places kept open in defiance of the law, and in consequence others suffered.

17. As a matter of fact, all the big drapers in Auckland do close now on the Saturday afternoon?—Not all; the D.S.C., Smith and Caughey, Milne and Choyce, and McMasters and Shalders close on the Saturday.

18. Are they not the principal ones?—I suppose they would say so. Of course, it is this way: we cannot get up any sports, and, as far as Volunteering is concerned, we assistants cannot become Volunteers. And, then, there are many things of which we are deprived by not being able to get away on Saturday. We cannot get to cricket or football, or any other game of that sort on Saturday.

19. As a matter of fact, the shopkeepers are divided in opinion, and those who already close on the Saturday join with the shop-assistants in this matter?—No; I do not think they take much interest in the matter. I think it is those who now close on the Wednesday who desire to close on Saturday. Mr. Walker has a petition from shopkeepers on the subject.

20. *Mr. Hardy.*] You seem to have made out a very good case: is it at the same time popular with the people of Auckland generally?—As far as the working-classes are concerned it is.

21. The buyers as well as the sellers?—Yes.

22. You take the buyers into consideration also?—Yes; because we propose that there should be a late night on Friday.

23. If it is so popular, is there not a diversity of opinion as well?—Yes.

24. Is there not a small section of the community opposed to this movement?—A small section of the community would be opposed to anything the Government might do.

25. I think the question of Government should not be brought into our deliberations here. We do not recognise party in a Committee. As this movement is so popular as you say—and no one wishes to dispute your statement—would you not recommend that the votes of those interested should be taken, because if the question is as you say, then a big majority would carry out your wishes?—We are ready to take the vote of the people as to closing on one day.

26. You would not be opposed to them if they said that Wednesday was the best day?—No.

27. You know that there are other parts of New Zealand which are differently circumstanced from Auckland. In Canterbury we might choose Saturday. You would not object to our having Saturday?—No.

28. Or Wednesday, if we chose it?—No.

29. Do you think it would be the right thing for the Auckland people to take the vote of people as far away from them as those in Canterbury?—No.

30. *Mr. Bollard.*] You spoke of leaving it to the vote of the people: do you understand that the issue would be whether the holiday should be on Wednesday or Saturday, or whether it should be compulsory?—I should leave it to them to say on what day it should be. As local people they would know which day would be most convenient to them. The vote should be taken of the people in the city and of those within a radius of three miles from the city boundary.

31. *Mr. Tanner.*] You spoke of the Saturday-night parade: what does that mean?—It is merely a matter of the people parading up and down the streets. The great majority of people walking about the town are not the purchasers.

32. You do not think the number of working-people coming into the town on Saturday does not assist the takings?—Of course, it must have effect upon trade.

33. But you think there is no perceptible increase in the takings?—I do not think so.

34. What kind of shops take the money on such occasions?—I think they all get a fair share.

35. There is no exceptional amount of money taken on that night?—No.

36. *Mr. Sidey.*] You say you come here in the interest of the employees?—Yes.

37. But not to oppose the employers?—No.

38. You are aware that there are a large number of employers in the colony to whose interest this arrangement would be diametrically opposed?—Yes.

39. Are there any in Auckland?—Well, there are a certain number of small shopkeepers who think that it would be opposed to their interest.

40. In what part of Auckland do you work?—In Queen Street.

41. That is in the centre of the city?—Yes. I am working in the last clothiers' shop towards the wharf.

42. Is it one of the large shops?—It is one of the largest shops of its kind in New Zealand.

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.

65. *Mr. Colvin.*] What business are you in?—I am in the boot trade.
66. You would leave it to a referendum?—Yes.
67. Do not a large number of country people come in on the Saturday to do their shopping?—No; it is on the Friday that they do it, and early in the week.
68. Do you now speak for the general workers, or is it simply for the shop-assistants?—I believe that the bulk of the people are in favour of it.
69. Do the workers get the Saturday half-holiday?—Yes.
70. And they are anxious that the shop-assistants should get it also?—Of course, there is a diversity of opinion, and that is why I think there should be a referendum.
71. Of course, you can get any amount of signatures to a petition so long as they have nothing to pay?—I think the matter should be decided by the peoples' vote, as that may be regarded as their absolute conviction.
72. Then, there is not much stress to be laid upon a petition? As long as there is no expense attached to the matter people will sign anything?—I do not believe that there is going to be the loss to the trade that there is supposed to be. If there were, I am one who would be absolutely ruined; but I have proved satisfactorily to myself that the loss of Saturday's takings would be made up on Friday.
73. *Mr. Davey.*] Do you come down almost on your own responsibility?—I came more especially to represent the interests of the workers. I may say that in former years I was secretary to the Knights of Labour Early-closing Committee, who were in favour of the closing on Saturday. In September last year I got up a requisition to close two nights per week at 6 o'clock, and I got twenty-two out of twenty-seven to sign it; but because the other five would not agree we were not able to close, which shows the necessity of legislation to protect majorities.
74. You represent yourself alone?—No; four or five other shopkeepers asked me to come down, and contributed towards my expenses.
75. You suggest that it should be left to the vote of the people. In discussing that matter did it suggest itself to you as to what should be the roll?—No; but I think it should be referred to the general roll—the parliamentary roll.
76. *Mr. Barber.*] You said that you would be willing to take the vote of the people of the district. Would it not follow that certain districts would have one afternoon and others another? Supposing that Auckland agreed to have Saturday, Wellington Wednesday, and Wanganui Thursday, there would be a dislocation of business? Is it not necessary to make the half-holiday colonial, or there would be different arrangements in different places for the paying of wages, the running of cheap trains, and the other facilities which are given on half-holidays?—I do not think it would make any difference to Auckland if Wellington had the half-holiday on Wednesday and some other place had it on Thursday.
77. If you want to make the half-holiday compulsory you must pay the wages on some other day than Saturday, and cheap trains must be run on some other day, and all these other facilities which now exist for the public on the half-holiday would have to be altered. I understand that the recent trial made in Auckland has not been a success?—The law was imperfect, so I think the decision should be left to the people of the district, but that the area of the district should be large enough to avoid anomalies. The keeping of the Saturday half-holiday had not a fair trial in Auckland.
78. Which is the half-holiday in Auckland now?—Wednesday.
79. I should like to ask those who represent the shop-assistants whether in the event of their being another holiday in the week the shop-assistants lose the Wednesday half-holiday?—Yes.
80. Would the factory people still have their half-holiday on the Saturday?—Yes.
81. Therefore it is a disadvantage as far as the shop-assistants are concerned; that is to say, at Christmas time, with the Boxing Day holiday, you have to work later, and you lose your usual half-holiday?—Yes. The fact of the matter is that we fear a public holiday, because it means our losing our customary half-holiday and working later at night.
82. Do you not think it would be an advantage to make the half-holiday colonial?—I have been sent here to advocate the compulsory half-holiday, but if that is not carried, then we should be ready to submit the question to a vote of the people of the district.
83. *Mr. Hardy.*] About losing this half-holiday, you say that if a holiday is proclaimed in the week you lose the half-holiday?—Yes.
84. Is it not according to the law that you should get it?—According to the law if there is another holiday in the week we lose the half-holiday.
85. Then, the factory people have a greater advantage than you have?—Yes.
86. Are they not generally pieceworkers, who get paid according to the work they do?—No; according to the Arbitration Act most of the piecework has been done away with. The bulk of the factory-hands are now paid weekly wages.
87. Then, you think they have an advantage over the shop-assistants?—Oh, yes. They get the half-holiday as well as the public holiday, but we lose the half-holiday and have to work later.
88. You would be perfectly satisfied if this matter were left in the hands of the people, and that they should take a vote upon it?—Yes, as long as the shop-assistants had a say in the matter.
89. Of course they are on the roll?—Yes.
90. *The Chairman.*] To make the matter clear with regard to pieceworkers, I would ask you whether it is not customary to stop a man's wages if he is absent for a day, and is not a deduction made if he is absent for half an hour?—Yes, with the exception of boys and girls employed in a factory.
91. Another point is this: that the shop-assistants desire that the Bill should go through as printed?—That is so.
92. And if they cannot get that?—We should prefer to have a referendum to the people of the district.

Mr. Walker : We should like to have the referendum, but as clause 7 of the Bill stands a small number of the people could make it compulsory, and then there would very soon be an agitation to have it changed.

Mr. Dickson : The Inspector has to try and do justice to all, but it is a difficult thing so to do when some close on Wednesday, some on Thursday, and others on Saturday. There is now a great difficulty in the way of the local Inspector with so many different days made half-holidays ; but if there were only one half-holiday in the week, then the Inspector could go round and see that no shops were open.

93. *Mr. Hardy.*] You say that you are placed in a different position from the factory-hands, and yet you acknowledge that there is a deduction from their wages if they are absent, with the exception of boys and girls?—As far as the shops go, there is nothing stopped from the girls who are engaged in the workrooms. They come into the class of factory-hands.

94. But the great bulk of the factory-workers are men and women who are engaged at so much per week. Is it not customary if men are not in their places when they are supposed to be there that a deduction is made from their wages?—I think so.

95. Consequently they are not placed in a more favourable position than the others?—They are placed in a more favourable position in this respect: that they are paid for the statutory holiday, and we are not, because we lose the half-holiday.

96. Are you in favour of being paid for overtime?

Mr. Dickson : We are not in favour of it as far as shops are concerned. At present the assistants are paid more permanent salaries, and do not lose if they are ill. If they were paid overtime they would lose many of the privileges which at present they get ; but if we go off for a day or two, then there is a deduction from our wages.

97. *Mr. Hardy.*] Are you aware of the custom in Canterbury and Otago?—No.

98. Are you aware that it is the custom there to allow a man to go off for ten or twelve days without making a deduction from his pay?—Then, you are more generous than they are with us.

99. We get good men?—No doubt if that is the custom.

100. *Mr. Barber.*] Do you prefer to have the Act at present in force to having a provision for paying for overtime?—Well, we did not come down with any instructions to express an opinion on that subject. For myself, I do not think that it would be advisable to have a system of paying shop-assistants for overtime? In the shop in which I am employed we do not have any night-work, except occasionally, and then the hands arrange among themselves who shall come back. The suggestion I would make is that the assistants should be allowed to be employed for a certain amount of overtime without increased pay. That is the custom in Auckland.

Mr. Mackinlay : The question of payment for overtime is not a burning question with us. We think it is not necessary, and that it is not worth considering.

101. *Mr. Hardy.*] The Bill makes it compulsory, and you would support the Bill. Do you not think that the man who treats his employees liberally should pay them if they have to go back to work?—Not if he treats them liberally in other ways. As far as we are concerned, if we have to go back to work at night we get our tea-money, and we are quite contented with the present arrangement.

MR. ROBERT FRENCH, MR. JOHN RENDELL, and MR. THOMAS PROSSER in attendance.
(Nos. 25, 26, and 27.)

The Chairman : We understand, gentlemen, that you have come here to give evidence with regard to the Shops and Offices Bill. Will you be good enough to make such a statement as you think proper, and then the Committee will ask you questions.

Mr. French : I beg to say, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, that I represent the Grocers' Union of Auckland. The Grocers' Union wish to call attention to two or three matters in connection with the Bill. First, with regard to the definition of "shop-assistant" and "office-assistant," there is a contrast in the Bill which we think may lead to great inconvenience. We consider that the word "clerical" in the definition of "shop-assistant" should be omitted. The second matter is in connection with section 3, which reduces the shop hours as fixed by the Arbitration Court from fifty-three hours a week and ten hours a day to fifty-two hours a week and nine hours a day. Then, subsection (2) of the same section conflicts with the award of the Court. I refer to the provision with regard to stocktaking. Under this Bill you have to give written notice to the Inspector, to which our union objects, because we do not know when pressure of business may require extra hours. Again, the award of the Arbitration Court makes provision for fifty hours' overtime in the year without payment, and this Bill reduces that time to thirty hours in the year, and we object to that. We consider that section 4 is rather too strict, because all shop-assistants are not regularly employed, and sometimes men have to be taken on for a short time when there is a press of work, and this section would lead to much inconvenience. Then, we think that in subsection (b) of that section there should be an exemption in regard to carters. In winter-time especially carters would prefer to get their work done and then go off, but under this provision they will not be able to do so. In regard to section 7, which refers to the weekly half-holiday, we ask for the retention of the present shop hours, as determined by the conference, within large districts. In Auckland we find that in one or two places the suburban district abuts upon the city, and it is extremely awkward, because one side of a street may have to keep the half-holiday while the other side has its shops open. Our union strongly objects to this, and would prefer to adhere to the decision of the conference. Another thing is that there should be two days in the week on which a shop can close—Wednesday and Saturday—and the shopkeeper should be allowed to give a month's notice of the day on which he elects to close. We recognise that at present there are so many days on which a shop may close that it is very inconvenient to the public, and we think that there should be only two days on which a shop could

close, as is the case in New South Wales. That would obviate the difficulty which exists at present. With regard to section 9, relating to special holidays, our union objects to Labour Day being recognised in a Shops Bill as a special holiday. In the Arbitration Court there are ten holidays provided for. Of course, the award is only for a limited period. It has now run for six months, and there are eighteen months still to run, and we object to Labour Day being made a special holiday in a Shop Hours Bill. We would ask the Committee to retain the provision which at present exists. We think that the weekly half-holiday should be compulsory, and that the decision as to the day on which we are to close should be left to the local bodies. We strongly approve of section 13, which regulates the hours during which barmaids may be employed in hotels. In regard to section 14, which relates to the early closing of shops in a district on requisition by three-fifths of the shopkeepers in the district, we think that there should be some way provided for registering the signatures of the shopkeepers in a district. We also think that the areas of the districts should be enlarged, that the Road Boards and Highway Boards and other small suburban Boards should be brought into the area when they exist within two miles of the city. We have at present streets in Auckland which belong to three different local bodies—one part to the City Council, another part to a suburban Council, and another to a Road Board, and that leads to an inconvenience which would be obviated by enlarging the area of the district. With regard to section 16, relating to the closing-hours of offices, we suggest that there should be inserted the words "or retail business." It is recognised that there are many retail businesses which close on Wednesday, but have to leave their clerk to do his necessary work, and then he can get away on Saturday. Our union objects to the latter portion of clause 19, after subsection (c). We think that the provisions of that portion of the clause are unworkable and unnecessary. They refer to the case of a ledger-keeper working after time, and we think that the limitation of time is not workable, because the clerk may have made an error in his books, and it would take him longer than is here provided to discover and rectify it. Then, the question was raised, in connection with section 26, whether the assistant so employed would not come under the provision with regard to the payment for overtime. These are the main points that I have been asked to bring before you.

Mr. Rendell: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—I represent the Associated Shopkeepers of Auckland. You will not require to listen to many arguments from me, because I suppose you have listened already to everything that can be said upon the subject. It is a surprise to me that any inquiry should have been thought necessary on this Shop Hours Bill with regard to the Saturday half-holiday. I should have thought that any gentleman who understands the interests of the working-classes would have at once seen that Saturday opening is a necessity for the people, seeing that Saturday has been chosen by them as the universal shopping-day. I contend that no other day will answer the purpose of a half-holiday, when we take the workers into consideration, so well as Wednesday, which has been the half-holiday for eight years, and has been found suitable. I am certain there will be less friction if the Wednesday half-holiday is continued than if this change is made. When persons come into town now they can get what they want on the Wednesday and Saturday. If you make the Saturday the universal half-holiday it will cause great inconvenience to the public who do their shopping on that day. I have here in my hand a summary of the results of a canvass that we, as a committee, made of Auckland and the suburbs. This canvass was undertaken by members of the committee who went out to collect signatures of shopkeepers, and we have got a total of 669 shopkeepers who ask that the present Wednesday half-holiday shall be continued. That is an average of over 80 per cent. of the shopkeepers in Auckland. If you leave out the larger shops in the city, it leaves about 90 per cent. in the suburbs who are in favour of the present Wednesday half-holiday. I may say, also, that in Devonport, which is a small town on the north side of the harbour, twenty-one shopkeepers signed in favour of the Wednesday half-holiday, and nine against it or indifferent. At the Thames there were eighty-one shopkeepers who signed in favour of continuing things as they are now, and there were only eight against it. At Te Aroha twenty-four signed the petition for the Wednesday half-holiday, but we have no account of the number of those who were indifferent or against it. At Onehunga there were thirty for and three against. At Karangahape and Paeroa there were thirty-five for and only one against. In Hamilton there were thirty-five for, and we have no account of those who were against it. We contend, therefore, that as far as the shopkeepers are concerned they are almost unanimously of opinion that things should remain as they are. In the Auckland District the suburbs are very much scattered about; and I wish also to call attention to this fact: that in Queen Street, Auckland, many shops already close on Saturday evenings, and have done so for the last eight years. They find it suits them. The class of people with whom they do business is what you might call the fashionable class, and those shops do not lose any business by closing on the Saturday evening. The people who do their shopping on the Friday are the people who come in to the market. They spend almost the whole day in connection with the markets, and then, having done their shopping in the centre of the town, they go back to the station, and those in the suburbs see nothing of them. As to the Saturday trade, I may say, after twenty years' experience, and knowing the small shops in the suburbs as well as in other parts of the town, and speaking for myself, that on Saturday we do considerably more trade than we do on any other two days in the week. Tuesdays and Thursdays are the other two best days, but on Saturday we do more trade than we do on those two days put together. Sometimes on Saturday an assistant will make up two books of fifty each in sales, whereas on other days you will not have more than half or a third of a book. This shows that the trade of the shops depends to a large extent upon the Saturday work—I mean the small shops and the shops in the suburbs. I spoke to a shopkeeper in the fruit business, and he said he did more business in the five hours on Saturday afternoon and evening than he did in the whole of the rest of the week. If you were to canvass the city, as we have done, and especially the suburbs, you would find that the same remark would be made in almost every shop you went

into. We depend to a large extent on the Saturday business, and I can assure you that without that trade we should find it very difficult to meet our engagements. Again, there is a large number of shopkeepers in the suburbs who do what is known as a "tick" trade. That is to say, the working-classes take their supplies from these shops during the week, and pay for them on Saturday, and they take as much on the Saturday as they do during the whole of the rest of the week. Some of them said that they could not believe that Mr. Seddon would inflict such an injury on the small shopkeepers as to compel them to close on the Saturday afternoon. And, then, the closing at 6 o'clock on other days in the week would be a great injury to them. I think from these facts you will see that it is a most unwise thing to take the Saturday afternoon and evening away from these people. Another feature is this: that workers who are engaged in factories have no other time in which to do their shopping except Saturday afternoon and evening. If this Bill is carried into law as it stands at present, working-people will have no time in which they can do their shopping. Many persons of the artisan class come into my shop on the Saturday afternoon and evening, and they have told me that no other day would suit them as well for doing their shopping. Why, then, should we be asked to make a change and cause this great inconvenience to a large class of the community? It seems to me that we are called upon to make this sacrifice in order that some more people may be able to go and play. It is not every married man who wants to go to a football or cricket match, and it seems to me that we have come to a state of things in this colony in which people think more of play and sports than of anything else. I have made it my business to inquire into these matters, and I find that in some places where the Saturday closing has been adopted it has been found to be a failure, and the people have been only too glad to go back to the Wednesday half-holiday. Those people who go to sports and that sort of thing, when they return from them will not go shopping, but will spend their money in another place; and that will be intensified if shops are to be closed on the Saturday afternoon. Some people have said to me that Wednesday is no good as a half-holiday; but I am positive that it leads to far more business being done on the Saturday. Taking all these facts into consideration, I am of opinion that there should not be a change from the Wednesday half-holiday to a Saturday half-holiday. It seems to me that there is too great a desire now to go and play. It reminds me of the fable of the little boy and the bird. The little boy wanted some one to play with him, so he said to the bird, "Come and play with me"; but the bird said, "I cannot go and play with you, because I have to attend to my nest." And the little boy could get no one to play with him. It seems to me that we are asked to shut up our shops on the Saturday in order that some one may go and play. I say we cannot afford to go and play; we have to earn a living for ourselves and families, and it would be a very serious matter to us if we lost our Saturday trade. Then, again, there are other trades which would be materially affected. There are, for instance, the tobacconists. They complain, and very truly, that, if they are compelled to close on the Saturday afternoon and evening, the publichouses will still be kept open, and they will sell cigars, cigarettes, and tobacco; while the tobacconists, who look to the Saturday very much for their profit in business, will be closed. I do not think that I need trouble you by saying anything more, but I have here a letter from a tradesman in Onehunga, a portion of which I would like to read to you. [Copy of letter not supplied.]

Mr. Thomas Prosser: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—I do not wish to occupy your time unduly. I appear here in conjunction with Mr. Rendell to represent the associated shopkeepers of Auckland. I may say, in connection with the petition which Mr. Rendell has mentioned, that unfortunately we did not bring it with us, but I hope that that petition will be laid afterwards before this Labour Bills Committee. In connection with this matter, I should like to say that those whom I represent are chiefly opposed to the provision of the Bill which makes the Saturday half-holiday compulsory. It is generally acknowledged that the Saturday is the general holiday with most people because the employees are paid on that day. Most of the operatives in Auckland receive their wages on that day. It seems to me that if that is so, and the shopkeepers have to close on the Saturday afternoon and evening, the employees and a large number of other people who have money in their pockets and require articles will be very much inconvenienced, and the shopkeepers will be losers. I called on not only the large shopkeepers but also the small shopkeepers in Auckland. I took the petition round against the compulsory Saturday afternoon and evening closing. I called in Hobson Street and Victoria Street, and there were fifty-seven persons who were against the Saturday compulsory half-holiday, seven shopkeepers who were indifferent, and three who were very much against the petition. But in speaking to the small shopkeepers I found no dissentients. The answer to my inquiry "Will you sign the petition?" was invariably "Most decidedly I will sign it, because if we are compelled to close on that day we shall be ruined. One-third of our week's takings is on that day, and if we lose it it will be a very serious matter to us." You will see, therefore, that it is a very serious matter, and not one to be lightly interfered with by the Legislature when so considerable a proportion of the community would lose a great part of their income by the action taken. Another important thing is that one uniform law on the subject cannot be made for the whole colony. What might suit one place would not suit another. In a town like Wellington, for instance, it might suit the shopkeepers in the centre of the town to close on Saturday, because it will not interfere with their business; but if you go into the suburbs, where the operatives live, it will follow that the shopkeepers there will take more money on the Saturday afternoon and evening, and compulsory closing will cause great inconvenience to those who dwell in those parts of the city. Therefore the law which might be right for one portion of a district would not be right for another. Let me say that in New South Wales they have a law in force which provides for compulsory closing at 6 o'clock, but it is optional with the shopkeepers to say whether they will close for the half-holiday on Saturday or Wednesday. In this Bill you propose to make the Saturday half-holiday compulsory, but that the closing during the rest of the week shall be optional. You will find that in Sydney the law at present in force works excellently. It has been in operation there for some four years, and there has been no trouble under it. Another matter has been touched upon by one of the gentlemen

here. I find the opinion exists amongst a great number of shopkeepers that they should not be compelled to close when hotels and publichouses are allowed to remain open. The result of that compulsion will be that people will be unable to obtain the necessaries of life, but if the publichouses are allowed to remain open they will be able to spend their money on what is not a necessity. Here is another little matter which will show what the people of Auckland think of the result of such legislation: A meeting of the shop-assistants was held on Monday, the 3rd August, in favour of Saturday closing. The report in the paper puts it in this way—that the meeting was called by a large advertisement, and the citizens were supposed to be there in large numbers, but the result was that there were about a hundred persons present, and by them a resolution was carried that Saturday was the most desirable day for the half-holiday. This resolution was carried by ten holding up their hands in favour of it and six against it. You will find that in the report of the *Star* of the 3rd August. I do not know that I have anything more to say. I have said that I would not take up your time more than was necessary, and I have now only to repeat that this Saturday closing will not affect the larger establishments, some of which already close on the Saturday afternoon. But there is this most important feature: that the small shopkeepers look upon it that this legislation is going to squeeze them out of the business, because half of the business they do is done on Saturday, and they must be ruined if they are compelled to close. I trust you will give these matters your careful consideration.

102. *Mr. Witheford.*] Were you, Mr. French, in business in Auckland when the Saturday-afternoon closing commenced?—Yes, I was; and a great many persons refused to close, and the consequence was that it broke down.

103. If the Saturday half-holiday were made universal would it be better?—I am quite sure that it would be unsatisfactory. Then there is this point, which should not be overlooked, and that is that the Wednesday half-holiday is beneficial to both the traders and the assistants, because it has not been preceded by a late night, whereas if you have a compulsory half-holiday on the Saturday there will necessarily be a late night on the Friday, and the assistants will be kept very busy both then and on the Saturday morning, and that will take away a great deal of the joy from their half-holiday. I may say that I have taken a great interest in this matter for years. I was one of the first to agitate in regard to it, and I was secretary to the shop-hours agitation in Auckland. As secretary to the committee, I found that the buyers were very much opposed to the Saturday closing.

104. Are you aware of the opinion of the Auckland shop-assistants in regard to the matter?—Of course, they would pray for the Saturday half-holiday; but Mr. Bollard knows that there are men in Onehunga who signed for the compulsory closing on Saturday during the agitation but who now want the Wednesday closing and not the Saturday closing.

105. *Mr. Bollard.*] Have you any idea of how many shops there are in Auckland and the suburbs?—I have no idea; but I can say this—that in our canvass we took in Auckland, Parnell, and Newmarket, and we got 669 signatures.

106. Does that include the whole of those who are in favour of the Wednesday half-holiday?—Those in favour of it being optional. In Auckland there is a custom which, I believe, does not obtain elsewhere—that for many years the large retailers close on Saturday.

107. It has been stated to this Committee that as a set-off against the Wednesday closing and the making of Saturday the half-holiday the returns to the people interested would be the same. That is to say, that if the shopkeepers did not get the money on one day they would get it on another—that the volume of trade would be the same?—Of course the volume of trade would be the same, but it would be distributed in a different way. It would dislocate trade very much indeed. For instance, the butchers would not care to have to close on the Saturday, and there are the bakers. People must get their bread on the Saturday, as they have the Sunday before them.

108. It has also been stated to the Committee that although the Saturday might be considered the natural half-holiday, still, if it were made compulsory it would be the ruin of the small shopkeepers. Do you think that that would be the case?—My impression is that it would be ruinous to the small shopkeepers. The small trader does nearly half his weekly business on the Saturday, and if he lost that it would mean ruin to him.

109. It has been also stated to the Committee that the country people do not come into town on the Saturday afternoon. Is that your experience?—If the Committee were to get a return from the Railway Department of the number of persons carried on the railways on the Saturday afternoon they would find that hundreds of persons do come into town on that day with their wives and families.

110. You know, as a matter of fact, that within a radius of ten miles thousands do come in on the Saturday?—Yes.

111. And the fact of the large shops in Queen Street being closed on the Saturday would give that trade to the small shops?—Yes.

112. Does that include the small retailers in Queen Street who now keep open on Saturday?—Yes. There has been a petition sent here in favour of closing on Saturday, but that has been signed by a number of persons who are not so directly interested in the trade. I believe it has been signed by young fellows who are not more than eighteen and a half years of age, but who will be old enough to vote at the next general election, whereas our petition has been signed by shopkeepers alone. There are fifty of the shopkeepers in Queen Street who have signed it.

113. I understand you to mean that those fifty are in favour of continuance of the present system?—Yes.

114. And those who have signed the other petition are not shopkeepers, but merely youths of eighteen years of age?—Some of them are. I do not say that they all are.

115. *Mr. Davey.*] Do you not think that if you had the Saturday half-holiday there would still be the same volume of trade?—Possibly so.

Mr. Rendell: We do not say that the volume of trade would not be the same, but what we object to is the distribution of it. We know that business is very flighty, and that if we lose customers it is very hard to get them back again. No shopkeeper would care to move his shop from one side of the street to the other, because he would know that he would lose his customers. If you divert your customers from where you are trading they will not come back again. We had an experiment of that sort in Auckland eight years ago. I was not so strong a man in business then as I am now, and I know that it dislocated my trade for several months. It would have the same effect upon the small shopkeepers now. They never collect the money due to them until Saturday, and if you compel them to close on that day they will lose the whole of that.

116. *Mr. Davey.]* You say that you represent the associated shopkeepers of Auckland?—Yes.

117. What does that embrace?—The drapers and the bootmakers and the fancy goods trade, and that sort of thing.

118. Does that include Queen Street?—Yes. Fifty of the shopkeepers in that street have signed the petition.

119. Any of the large ones?—No; they close already at 1 o'clock on Saturday, and whatever happens they will not be affected.

120. You said that as far as your business is concerned a large number of factory-hands and people of that class do their business with you on the Saturday?—Yes.

121. Does it not strike you that they could not do that business unless they had the half-holiday?—No.

122. You do not object to their having the half-holiday on Saturday?—Of course not. There is one thing which I have omitted to mention, and that is with regard to Labour Day. I was instructed to object to shopkeepers being compelled to keep Labour Day as a holiday, for this reason: that we do not deduct wages from our hands if they are away for a day or two sick. Of course, if they are away for a week or two we have to reckon with them, but we do not deduct anything from their wages if they are away sick for a day or two, and we think that we should not be obliged to pay them when they are away on Labour Day.

123. Do you know of your own knowledge what is the ordinary custom?—I understand that one large firm used not to deduct wages from employees when they were away, but since these compulsory laws have been in force they do not pay their hands if they are away for any reason.

124. Not if they are away on account of sickness?—If they are away for a day or two through sickness they are paid, but if they are away for a fortnight they have to be reckoned with. I should perhaps pay them if they were away for a week on account of sickness.

125. Would you object to a referendum to the people as to the day for the half-holiday?—I do not think so, provided we had sufficient notice.

126. Would you have any objection to the political roll being used for that purpose?—I assume that the political roll would have to be used, and I would not object to that if we had sufficient notice beforehand.

127. *Mr. Sidey.]* Within what radius should the referendum be taken?—Within a radius of about eight miles.

128. With regard to the volume of trade, you told us that the volume of trade would be the same if you had the Saturday half-holiday?—Yes; but there would be a shaking-up on all hands, and we do not know what might come about.

129. Could you suggest where the trade would go?—I can only say that it might not come to my shop, and therefore I speak feelingly. It seems to me very much like shaking a pair of dice and not knowing how they may come down; and I do not know what may be the result of this change if it is brought about. We do considerably more business on the Saturday than on any other day in the week.

130. In the afternoon and evening?—In our Newton shop we are busy from the moment we open till we close. Newton is about a mile from the city.

131. You have a petition which you wish to present to the House?—Yes; I have brought it with me.

132. To what extent is it signed by the suburban shopkeepers?—By 90 per cent. of them.

133. What steps were taken to obtain the signatures?—There was a meeting of about a hundred and fifty shopkeepers, at which a committee was nominated, and they were asked to go round and get signatures, and they went round two-and-two and got them.

134. Were you aware that another petition was being sent round?—Of course we knew it.

135. You are aware that there was a small petition signed by about sixty shopkeepers in Queen Street. Does that represent the feeling of the shopkeepers in Queen Street?—No; because we know that a great many were against it.

136. We have been told that Auckland is different from other places in this: that its market day is on Friday?—Yes.

137. Also that the volume of trade on Friday is pretty well equal to that on Saturday?—It would be in Queen Street. We take as much as 20 per cent. more in the Queen Street shop on the Friday than we do on the Saturday, but in the Karangahape Road I am kept busy from 10 o'clock on the Saturday until I close. In the afternoon the place is crowded, and in the evening it is as much as we can do to serve our customers.

138. The Saturday closing was tried for a time?—Yes; and, as I say, it dislocated my business for fully four months.

139. Was the Saturday closing universal?—It was not universal; but I was away at Taranaki at the time, and cannot say to what extent it was carried.

Mr. French: I may say that Newton is now really a part of the city. It is no longer a suburb, and Karangahape Road is the second most important street in Auckland.

140. *Mr. Sidey.]* When the Saturday half-holiday was introduced, over what area was it carried out?—Over the city and suburbs.

141. What is your opinion as to the day on which the country people do most of their business in Auckland?—Friday; but we get no advantage from it in the Karangahape Road.

142. Then, so far as the Saturday closing is concerned, it would not affect the country trade?—Not the slightest.

143. With regard to the shop-assistants, do you know how their meeting was called?

Mr. Prosser: It was called by advertisement, which was addressed to the workers, and the assistants, and the operatives, and those connected with the Trades and Labour Council.

144. Did the advertisement indicate what the object of the meeting was?—Undoubtedly.

145. *Mr. Kirkbride*.] I would ask Mr. Rendell whether the present system works satisfactorily?—There is no fault to be found with it, except this: that some shops close on Tuesday, and some on Wednesday, and some on Thursday, and we think that they should be compelled to fall into line with ourselves.

Mr. Prosser: We are in favour of there being an option between Wednesday and Saturday, instead of there being so many days as there are at present.

146. *Mr. Kirkbride*.] You would have no objection to a *plébiscite* of the whole of the inhabitants of the district, including shopkeepers, employers, and employees, and their customers?—I am not prepared to say that. You must remember that majorities often do wrong. I see no reason why the present arrangement should be disturbed. We consider that if the Saturday were made a compulsory half-holiday the amount of business which we would do on other days would not make up to us for the loss which we would suffer by having to close on Saturday.

147. I asked about the *plébiscite* for this reason: that I wished to know whether you would prefer a compulsory half-holiday on Saturday to taking a *plébiscite* of the people as to the day on which the half-holiday should be held?—Certainly not. I do not agree with a *plébiscite*, because many would vote who have no interest whatever in the matter. Still, it would be preferable to compulsory closing on the Saturday.

148. I understand that petitions have been carried round, and the statement has been made that there were sixty shops in Queen Street who were in favour of the optional system: is that so?—Yes.

149. Is it not a fact that for many years past the ironmongers and booksellers have closed on the Saturday?—Yes. I have seen the petition, and the signatures very largely consist of those who already close on Saturday.

Mr. French: I may say that some of the larger shopkeepers object to the compulsory Saturday-afternoon closing because of the extra work which it will entail upon them on the previous day. I am sure it will lead to a large amount of evasion of the law, and that there will be a great deal of Sunday trading, and there will be any amount of discontent and trouble.

150. *Mr. Laurensen* (to Mr. Rendell).] In what business are you engaged?—I am a draper.

151. I suppose that you are aware that there has been a great deal of irritation throughout the colony in the case of shops which have also factories attached to them. For instance, in the drapery business the girls who are engaged in the millinery department get away on one day, and those who are engaged in the shop get away on another. Do you carry on the two classes of business?—Yes, we run the two.

152. Would it not be better to have the holiday on the one day for factory and shop alike?—I do not think so. I think people would prefer to carry on the arrangement as it exists at present. For myself, I think that both the factory-hands and the shop-hands should have the holiday on Wednesday.

153. Where a factory and a shop are combined it would be better to have the half-holiday on one day?—I think so.

154. On what day do you close in Auckland?—On Wednesday.

155. Do you know what the day is in Canterbury?—I cannot say at the moment, but there is a list to be found which states the days on which shops in different localities close. I find that there are seventy-five towns in the colony which close on the Wednesday, and thirty-nine which close on Thursday.

156. Would it not be better to have a universal half-holiday?—That would depend upon the day which was chosen.

157. Would it not be better if one day were decided upon throughout the colony?—I do not think so. I think that each locality should have a measure of self-government, and be allowed to choose its own half-holiday within certain limits, because the circumstances of one locality are very different from those of another.

158. On what day do the banks and mercantile houses and wholesale establishments close in Auckland?—On Saturday.

159. When do most of the places pay their hands?—I think it is the common practice in drapers' establishments to pay their hands once a month. Some of them, I believe, pay once a fortnight, but I think the general practice is to pay once a month.

160. When do the factories pay their hands?—I think it is on Friday.

161. And the mercantile houses and wholesale dealers?—I think it is on Friday.

162. So that in that way the late night on Friday would be just as convenient for them for their shopping as the Saturday?—Most emphatically No.

163. Would this change interfere with the volume of trade? For instance, would the people consume less sugar and tea and other necessaries of life than they do at present?—Well, there are many things which we sell which are not absolute necessaries, but people come into town on the Saturday, and they go along the Karangahape Road, for instance, and they see something in my window which takes their fancy, and they come in and buy it. Therefore, although the volume of trade may be the same, and the same amount of money may be spent, I am not sure that the people will come to my shop.

164. That points to this : that the ladies who see something attractive in your window and go in and buy it are spending money unnecessarily?—I do not see that. Of course, we are dependent very much on the casual trade.

165. Put yourself in the position of the husband of this lady who makes these purchases. Would you not think that it would be a blessing to have shops closed on that day?—That might be so.

166. You understand that we are all anxious to give effect to the wishes of the majority of the people, and that is why we are desirous of getting the information?—I quite understand that.

167. I think it was Mr. French who said that a large number of people came into Auckland from the country on Saturday because of the special trains and the other facilities which are given to them. Supposing these facilities were given on the Friday, would not the people come in on the Friday instead of the Saturday?—No; because the people have to go back to their work next day, whereas in the case of the Saturday they have the Sunday holiday before them.

168. Speaking for yourself, Mr. French, which day would you prefer for the half-holiday, Thursday or Saturday?—I have already stated that Wednesday would be the best day for the retailers, because it is not preceded by a late night. The Saturday half-holiday would not be of nearly so much value, because I should have to work so late on the previous night. The factory-hands can enjoy their Saturday half-holiday because they have not had to work late on the Friday night; but that is not the case with those who are engaged in shops. I may say that in going through Parnell with the petition I spoke to one lady and asked her if she would not sign it, and she said, "I do not like to sign the petition because my husband does not want it. We should do more trade on the Sunday morning."

169. Which day would you prefer personally, the Saturday or the Wednesday?—I say that I prefer the present arrangement. I enjoy my Wednesday half-holiday because I have not had to work late on the previous night; but if I had to work late on the Friday, and work hard on the Saturday morning, I should not enjoy it so much. I believe the same is the case with most retailers, because whatever happens they have to get their business done.

170. Do you not think that the next day (Sunday) being a holiday would make up to him for the extra work he has had to do?—I do not think so.

Mr. Rendell: I employ between fifty and sixty hands, and I asked them to say which day they would prefer, Saturday or Wednesday, and they said they would rather have the Wednesday. I merely say that in order to show that I consulted the assistants, and they said they would prefer to have the half-holiday on Wednesday.

171. *The Chairman*.] You prefer that the half-holiday should be either on Wednesday or Saturday?—We prefer that the choice should be limited to those two days.

172. That is to say, that if the shopkeepers in Auckland give a month's notice to the Inspector they can have the half-holiday either on Wednesday or Saturday?—Yes.

173. Do you think that it would work satisfactorily, and that you could change the day on giving a month's notice?—I think so.

174. Do you not think that it would be better to have the Wednesday or the Saturday fixed as the half-holiday for everybody?—I do not.

175. Do you think it is better to have the shops opened on the Friday night?—I think you cannot make the people toe the mark and confine their business to one day. I think it would be better to have a choice between the two days, Wednesday and Saturday.

176. *Mr. Laurensen*.] You say that when the half-holiday was introduced there was a great agitation against it?

Mr. French: I do not think there was any great agitation against it in Auckland; but, generally speaking, it was objected to. The objection was to the Saturday half-holiday.

FRIDAY, 21ST AUGUST, 1903.

MR. ALBERT RICHARDS, MR. E. C. BATKIN, MR. ABRAHAM BERMAN, MR. JOSEPH DOWNES, and MR. WILLIAM GILBERT in attendance. (Nos. 28–32.)

The Chairman: I understand, gentlemen, that you desire to give evidence to the Committee with regard to the Shops and Offices Bill. We hope that you will make any statement you wish with regard to the Bill, and we shall be happy to hear anything you have to say, but I would ask you not to repeat what a previous member of the deputation may have said.

Mr. Albert Richards: I am president of the Hairdressers and Tobacconists' Association of Wellington. Our chief objection to the Bill is that it proposes to take our principal day of business from us. I may say that not only is it our principal day of business, but we do more business on that day than we do on any other three days in the week. I refer, of course, to the provision making the Saturday half-holiday a compulsory half-holiday. If that is carried it is likely to drive our trade into the old-time practice of Sunday trading, which we have been struggling for years to do without.

1. *The Chairman*.] But the hairdressers are exempted, are they not?—That is the case; but it only practically applies where the hairdresser is not also a tobacconist. I believe there are only four hairdressers in Wellington who are not also tobacconists. As a rule, the hairdressers and tobacconists are a combined trade, and you cannot keep your hairdressing-room open without having the shop in front open also. If we have to keep one part of the place open on the Saturday and the other on the Wednesday we shall have to put up a partition between them, and, to say nothing of the expense, it would be very inconvenient to have one part of the premises open on

the Wednesday and the other part open on the Saturday. We are not all born saints, and I am afraid that we should be led into breaking the law. For instance, if a person came into the hair-dressing-room to get his hair cut and we offered him change, he might say that he would prefer to take a packet of cigarettes or a cigar; we could scarcely refuse him, and yet if we gave them to him we should be breaking the law.

2. Would others sell them if you did not?—Oh, yes. The clubs and hotels do that, and we have to suffer. We have a petition before the House now with regard to that matter. I am speaking with twenty-four years' experience in the business in Cuba Street, and I can say that we do more business on the Saturday than we do on any other three days in the week. I should like the Committee to understand that I speak from many years' experience in the trade when I say that to compel us to close on the Saturday afternoon and evening would mean ruin to me and to a great many others in the trade.

Mr. E. C. Batkin: I am a tobacconist only, and have had fifteen years' experience in the business. I do not wish to take up your time, but there is one point which has been overlooked by the last speaker. The position of the tobacconist at present is that he is allowed to keep open on five days and a half in the week—*id est*, he is compelled by law to close on the Sunday and on the Wednesday afternoon, while his next-door neighbour, a hotelkeeper, is open on every day in the week, and he is able to sell cigarettes and cigars and tobacco to people on any day. That is to say, that he can sell goods by which we make our living on any day in the week, while we can only do so on five days and a half in the week. That is not fair. With regard to the Saturday afternoon closing, what we say is this: that if other sections of the community wish to do so, by all means let them do so, but do not compel us to close when other people who interfere with our trade are allowed to remain open. All we wish is that we should be put upon the same footing as those who can sell our goods on any day in the week.

Mr. Abraham Berman: I am a hairdresser and tobacconist. I have been in business for about twenty-two years, and think I ought to know something of the effect of having to close on Saturday. I particularly noticed after the Wednesday afternoon came into force what effect it had upon my business. I took up my books and looked through them to see whether we could not make up the loss on another day, and I found that it was not possible. The fact is that the clubs and hotels are selling our goods when we are compelled to close at 1 o'clock on any day. A customer does not care whether a tobacconist is closed or not, because he can get what he wants at a club or hotel. We have been to the Premier and to the Inspector on the matter; but the Inspector is powerless in the matter. There was a conference in Wellington about a year ago, and they practically recommended that a change should be made by doing away with hotels selling tobacconist's goods. It is very unjust that the Legislature should compel us to close when clubs and hotels can sell our goods when we are closed. Then, again, we are bound by the union laws, and have to give a man a half-holiday on a Wednesday, and if you are going to compel us to close on Saturday you will make it still worse, because under the award of the Arbitration Court we have to give our assistants a half-holiday on the Wednesday. Then, there is a lot of difficulty to contend with in connection with the hairdresser being able to keep open when the tobacconist has to close. Eighteen out of twenty have the two shops combined, and the result would be that we should practically have to close on both Wednesday and Saturday. We should have to keep the saloon open on Saturday and the shop open on the Wednesday; but the award requires us to give our assistants a half-holiday on the Wednesday, so you can understand in what a difficult position it would place those who carry on the two businesses together. As a rule, a customer has to pass through the shop to get to the hairdressing-saloon, and then when he has had his hair cut or had a shave, and you have to give him change, he is very likely to say, "Oh, give me a box of matches," or something of that sort; and if you do so you will be breaking the law, while at the same time the clubs and hotels are selling the goods which are bringing in to you your livelihood.

3. *The Chairman.*] Supposing the hotels were not allowed to sell on the Saturday afternoon?—I say that it would still make a great difference to us, and that we should lose what is equivalent to three days' trade if we had to close on that afternoon, because we do as much trade on the Saturday as we do on any other three days in the week. Of course, if you closed the clubs and hotels on that day it would make a difference, and the hardship would not be so great. But how are you going to alter the award of the Court? We have to stick to that, and the result would be that we should have to come to Parliament to get it altered.

Mr. Joseph Downes: I am a hairdresser and tobacconist. If the compulsory half-holiday on Saturday is carried it will practically mean ruin to the tobacconist and hairdresser. I can speak from sixteen or seventeen years' experience in Wellington. I know very well that Saturday is looked upon by hairdressers and tobacconists as the day on which you make up for the losses of the rest of the week, especially if it has been wet weather. Another thing, I think, is that it will lead to assistants going round to shave people on the Saturday and Sunday morning. It is already being done by some assistants since the Wednesday half-holiday has been introduced. They finish with their employers at 1 o'clock Wednesdays, and the next thing they do, as we know, is to go round with their bag to the hotels and other places and shave people. One or two have already established a trade in that way, and if the Saturday closing is enforced it will simply mean ruin to the tobacconists and hairdressers. Where the two classes of business are carried on together it would be almost impossible to carry on business under those conditions unless you put up a partition between the two portions of your business premises. There is no doubt that it would lead to a great deal of illegal trading. And then, with regard to a large number of retail shopkeepers, they have had experience of the Saturday closing, and I do not think they care for it, because they have gone back to the closing on Wednesday, or another day. I think in this respect Wellington is situated differently from other places, because some who have businesses on Lambton Quay do less business on Saturday, while those who are located in Te Aro do the largest of their trade. There is more done in Te Aro on the Saturday than there is on Lambton Quay, and that is why the

drapers and others on Lambton Quay want to close on Saturday. It must also be remembered that tobacco is a luxury, and people purchase more on Saturday than on other days, because next day is Sunday, and they generally smoke more on that day than they do on any other. They would also shave themselves if the saloons were closed. The consequence is that if the Saturday closing is brought into force we might just as well close for the whole day on Saturday, because employees and labourers cannot get away until the middle of the day, and we shall be closed at 1 o'clock. They would not purchase these small luxuries and extras on the Friday, and they constitute the chief part of our business; and if we lose that trade on the Saturday it will make it very difficult for us to carry on, particularly when we have such severe conditions placed upon us as the Arbitration Court enforces. It now takes us all our time to carry on. Some people say that the half-holiday makes no difference, but I can assure you, and I can prove it by my books, that the Wednesday closing makes a difference of £60 or £70 a year in my takings. That is the effect of closing on the Wednesday afternoon, and I can only say that if we have to close on the Saturday the result will be disastrous.

Statement read by WILLIAM GILBERT.

This deputation, which has been specially appointed to oppose the Saturday-closing clause in the Shops and Offices Bill, represents practically the whole of the master hairdressers and tobacconists of Wellington.

Reasons why we as a trade oppose Saturday closing:—

1. First of all the clause exempts hairdressers allowing them to choose another day, but as nearly all the hairdressers are also tobacconists the exemption can only apply to one or two shops, thus creating an injustice to the rest of the trade.

2. In our line of business Saturday's turnover is equal to and often exceeds that of three ordinary days; this being so, we submit that to tamper in any way with our best day's business is simply to court disaster and to impose a serious risk on all engaged in this trade.

3. Those who favour Saturday closing argue that what business is lost on Saturday is made up during the week. Our experience proves that, so far as our business is concerned, this is not the case, as in every instance where we have lost, through bad weather or some other cause, a portion of our Saturday's business it is never made up.

4. There are special reasons why Saturday is such a busy day in this business, reasons which would in no way apply to Friday. For instance, a large number of working-men living at a distance, owing to their getting off on Saturday afternoon, make it their business to come into the city and get all they require in the way of shaving and tobacco, and thus prepare themselves for the Sunday. Were we closed on Saturday we must lose that class of trade, which is considerable. We should also lose a large portion of our ordinary trade, as it would be utterly impossible for most of our customers to get their shaves before 1 o'clock on Saturdays, and a shave on Friday night would not be any good for Sunday, as one and all like to have a clean face for Sunday; therefore they would be compelled to do it themselves. We should thus lose heavily in this respect.

5. We as a trade are convinced that should Saturday closing become law a large portion of our cigarette and cigar trade would drift to the hotels. We already suffer in this respect, but under the altered conditions our trouble would be very much accentuated. We would urge the Committee to consider this point very carefully. I have spoken to quite a number of our assistants on this subject, and they agree with us in our opposition to the Saturday-closing clause.

In conclusion we trust that the Committee will see its way to recommend that the weekly half-holiday be allowed to remain as at present. We feel assured that the proposed alteration would result in serious loss, seeing that in every case where it has been tried they have had to revert to the old order of things.

4. *Mr. Colvin.*] You stated, Mr. Batkin, that your neighbour can sell tobacco and cigars and cigarettes on seven days in the week, and that you can only sell them on five days and a half?—Yes.

5. In what business is your neighbour?—A hotelkeeper; and my contention is that a person who wishes to buy a cigar or cigarette or tobacco on Sunday can do so in a hotel when he cannot come to me whose business it is to supply that class of goods.

6. But the hotel-bars are supposed to be closed on Sunday?—Yes; they are supposed to be closed, but I do not think it is much more than a supposition.

7. But if the bar is supposed to be closed, then they can only sell cigars and cigarettes and tobacco on six days in the week?—Just so, but the shops are absolutely closed.

8. Do the clubs also sell cigars and cigarettes and tobacco?—Yes; my experience is that they do sell them.

9. You think it would be a serious thing for you if you had to close on the Saturday afternoon and evening?—I can say, after fifteen or sixteen years' experience, that it would be a very serious loss to us if we had to do so. We do not want to prevent other people closing on the Saturday afternoon if they desire to do so. All we say is, do not close us.

10. *Mr. Sidey.*] Do I understand, Mr. Richards, that the deputation has been specially appointed by the Hairdressers and Tobacconists' Association to represent them?—Yes; at our last meeting it was left to the committee to appoint members of a deputation, and we were appointed.

11. This is an association of tobacconists and hairdressers?—Yes.

12. Does the association include the whole of those in the trade in Wellington and the suburbs?—It represents practically the whole of them.

13. Do hairdressers and tobacconists in the outlying districts belong to the association also?—We represent those in Petone. Of course, other towns are further away, and are differently situated from us.

14. Do any of your association carry on business in the suburbs, or are all of them in the city?—If you mean Newtown, we have members of the association there, and we represent them.

15. You say that you do three times as much business on the Saturday as you do on any other day in the week. Supposing that all the other shops were closed on the Saturday afternoon, and the shopping people did not come into town, how would that affect your Saturday business?—No doubt it would affect the Saturday afternoon, but we should make that up by using the Friday.

16. During which portion of the Saturday do you do the most business?—From 1 o'clock in the afternoon until 11 o'clock at night I am continuously at work.

17. Do you do a greater amount of business in the afternoon or in the evening?—It is as much as we can do both in the afternoon and evening.

18. Are there many assistants employed?—Yes.

19. What is their wish?—To have the present system continued. They enjoy the Wednesday half-holiday because it is a break in the week.

20. Have they taken any steps to represent their views?—No.

21. Suggestions have been made that a *plébiscite* of the people might be taken in the matter in the cities and surrounding districts: would you be in favour of leaving the matter to the people?—Yes. I do not see why those who do the shopping should not have a say in the matter.

22. Of course, the vote would be taken on the general electoral roll?—Yes.

23. You think there would not be any objection to such a course?—Well, I cannot say. If women had a vote you do not know how they would vote.

24. Would they not vote as their husbands told them?—No doubt they would.

25. *Mr. Davey.*] You say, Mr. Richards, that if the Saturday half-holiday is carried you should have an exemption. I would ask you would it be any good to you?—It would not be better to leave the provision out altogether.

26. The trouble is that the shop is in front and the hairdressing-room is at the back, and that to get to the room people have to pass through the shop?—Yes.

27. Supposing the Bill is carried with a universal half-holiday, would you prefer that to being allowed to keep your saloon open?—No; I should prefer to have the saloon open, because I believe if it has to be closed it will lead to Sunday trading.

28. Are you aware that the Christchurch tobacconists think that if the Bill is so carried they do not want an exemption?—I believe it is so.

29. You, Mr. Batkin, made a rather serious charge against hotelkeepers: do you know of your own knowledge that it is as you state?—I do not wish to bring a serious charge against hotels. What I know of my own knowledge is that hotels and clubs stock cigars and cigarettes, and in some cases tobacco, and that they are able to sell them to people all the week round, and I think we should be put in the same position.

30. *Mr. Colvin.*] If a man is stopping at a hotel the hotelkeeper supplies him with breakfast, and that man will get a cigar from him after breakfast; but you could not supply him with breakfast?—No; but I could supply him with a cigar.

31. *Mr. Davey.*] Do the clubs in Wellington supply others than members with tobacco?—I could not say.

Mr. Herman: I say they supply other than members. If a stranger is introduced into a club he puts his name down, and he is then supplied with cigars or tobacco.

32. *Mr. Davey* (to Mr. Downes).] You say there are hairdressers' assistants who go round to shave people after they have finished their work at the shop?—Yes.

33. Is that a common practice?—I think it has come into force since the award was made. People find it a convenience to have them come and shave them. They also go to the private hospitals. I know of one young fellow who did it regularly, and the consequence was that his employer lost one or two of his customers. The assistant acknowledged that he did it, and, of course, he was discharged.

34. Is there any hotel in Wellington that runs a barber's shop in connection with the hotel?—I do not think so.

35. I have been told that there are two or three?—I do not think so. My own shop is under a hotel, but I have no connection with the hotel.

36. You do not know of any case where they can be used on Sunday?—I do not.

37. *Mr. Hardy.*] You do not take exception to people shaving men on their own account?—I do not think it is right when you are paying that man to work for you.

38. But if you do not pay him?—I think this compulsory half-holiday on Saturday will lead to a great many assistants going round on Sunday to shave people, and we should lose custom.

39. *Mr. Ell.*] I would like to ask you, Mr. Batkin, if you have any objection to a *plébiscite* being taken in Wellington and the surrounding suburbs as to the day on which the holiday shall be taken?—I think it would be hardly fair to the shopkeepers. It would be a case of the frog and the boy, and we should be in the position of the frog. I think the best people to judge are the shopkeepers themselves, the people who do the business.

40. But the people who deal with the shops surely have some interest in the matter?—Yes; but their interest may not be on all-fours with that of the shopkeepers. Nobody is so well able to judge what suits him as the shopkeeper himself.

41. With reference to the hotels, you said that they sold cigars and tobacco?—With permission of the Committee I will withdraw that statement, and simply say that hotels stock cigars and cigarettes.

42. Are you aware from common report that they do sell them?—I will not go so far as to say that; but I know from my own knowledge that they do stock cigars and cigarettes, and in some cases tobacco, and I presume they would not stock them if they did not sell them.

43. With regard, Mr. Downes, to assistants going round from place to place shaving people, do you know of only one case?—I know of several, but I only referred to one specially.

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

week?—So far as our assistants are concerned, they are quite in sympathy with us in opposition to the Saturday half-holiday.

72. Are shop-assistants generally not in favour of a compulsory half-holiday?—I do not say that, because they are largely in favour of it.

73. I understand you to say that a compulsory Saturday half-holiday would be ruinous to trade?—I am speaking particularly about our own trade, and I think it would be ruinous to us.

74. You went so far as to express the opinion that many shops would have to close altogether?—A lot of the small tobacconists depend chiefly on the Saturday business, and they would have to close.

75. Does that apply to your own trade only?—I think the same thing would apply to a large number of trades, and especially among the small shopkeepers.

76. You think so much money would not be spent in tobacco and vegetables, and so on, which would be a loss to the district?—I do not say that. It would be a benefit to the small shops in the country towns, but it would be disastrous to the shops, both large and small, in the city.

77. Then, a less amount of money would be spent?—I will not say that; but it would alter the present position of things, and I can say confidently that the result would be disastrous to our trade.

78. Say a man has wages of £100 a year: if the Saturday was a compulsory half-holiday, would he be able to save money?—I can only speak for my own business, and I say that we would lose considerably, because a great deal of the money which we make is from people who come into town on that day. They would not come in merely to have a shave, because they can shave themselves.

79. Supposing the Saturday were made a half-holiday, then there would be many people who could not spend their money foolishly on the Saturday evening?—I dare say.

80. Then, it is not an unmixed evil?—I think the money which goes into the shops now would go into the hotels then.

81. You think that it would encourage drinking?—I am positive it would, and people who cannot get out of town would spend their money in the same way.

82. *Mr. Wood.*] You said that very often people went out of town, and just before that you said that you relied upon the country people coming into town to spend money in your shops on the Saturday. Now you say that town people could not get out of town?—I say they would not.

83. You object to the Saturday half-holiday because people would get their tobacco elsewhere: where do they get it on the Wednesday?—They get it in the hotels.

84. You do not object to that?—We have given evidence to show that we most decidedly object to it.

85. Do you think that would be done more if the half-holiday were on the Saturday?—Yes, because most people smoke more on the Sunday, and if the shops are not open for them to get their tobacco on Saturday they will get it at the hotels.

86. You think the spending-power would be less?—It would be in our business.

87. You only speak for your own business, and not for the general public?—I can only speak for our own business.

Mr. REINHOLD WEDDE, Mr. L. B. LINKLATER, Mr. JOHN GRAHAM, Mr. J. McGRATH, and Mr. ROBERT ORR in attendance. (Nos. 33-37.)

The Chairman.] I understand you wish to give evidence in connection with the Shops and Offices Bill, and as to the effect it will have upon those who are engaged in your calling. The Committee will be happy to hear what you have to say, but I would ask you to kindly not repeat what a previous speaker has said, as the time of the Committee is precious.

Mr. Wedde: I am a law clerk.

The Chairman.] Do you represent any particular organization?

Mr. Wedde: We had a Law Students' Association, but it has practically gone defunct, partly because the University offices are so far away that we could not use the library. I was secretary of that association at the time that the last petition from law students was sent to the House on this subject, asking for an exemption of the law clerks from the operation of the Bill. I have the petition here, and I may say that it is signed by a large number of law clerks. It is signed by sixty law clerks, who say that they have read the Bill, and also the petition which was sent in previously, and they think that they should be exempted from the operation of the Bill. I sent round a copy of the last petition and the present Bill, so that they might read it, and satisfy themselves as to the position in which they would be placed if brought under the operation of the Bill. The law clerks in Wellington are unanimously of opinion that the views expressed in that petition are correct, and that law clerks should be exempted from the operation of the Bill. A meeting of law clerks was called to consider the position and to decide what steps should be taken. The employers would have nothing to do with it. We thought that we might get a room in one of the offices to hold our meeting, but were told that the employers would have nothing to do with it. Personally, they were against the Bill; but they left it to us to take any course we might think fit. We therefore engaged a room at the Exchange Hall, and when the meeting was held there was only one dissentient voice, and that man has since signed the petition. As was stated in the last petition, we say that law clerks are in a different position from ordinary clerks, and that no legislation should be passed which would interfere with our relations with our employers. The law clerks are well satisfied with their present relations with their employers. They feel that they are well treated by their employers, and that if this Bill is passed in its present form it will possibly lead to friction with the employers, because they will say, "Here are certain hours fixed in which you can only work, and here is a

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

we should have our holidays reduced by one-half. They would deduct the extra days from our salaries, and would call upon us to work the maximum number of hours a day. Another point is this: that there is work which we shall not be allowed to take home at night. In the first place, it would be impossible for the Inspector to find out what kind of work we were doing, because he cannot go into private houses. We say that it is a great convenience for clerks when they have a little work to do to be able to take it home at night. If we have to do it at the office we lose the time it takes us to get there and back, whereas if we take it home we can very often do it and have our evening off as well. Then, again, under one of the provisions of the Bill we shall be driven from our offices at 5 o'clock, with some few exceptions. With law clerks this will be very inconvenient, because they intend to try and pass the examinations. Many cannot afford to buy the expensive books which it is necessary to study, and even if they could those books would be out of date in a year or two. They cannot afford to buy the Law Reports or the Law Encyclopædias, and therefore it is very convenient to them to be able to use their employers' libraries. If this Bill is passed as it stands, it means that the law clerks will be deprived of these privileges, because the employer would know that if he allowed his clerks to come back he might have to meet a charge of keeping his employees after time. But the main reason why we law clerks object to this Bill is this: that bringing the law clerks under the provisions of the Bill presupposes that some wrongs have been done to them, and that it is necessary to redress those wrongs. If the Bill is to be of any use it should give us more than we have got at present, and not that there shall be a provision that the minimum shall be less than we have. The Bill says in effect that the employers are trying to get more out of us than they have a right to do, while we say that they are treating us very liberally and generously, and that they get more work out of us because they treat us so well. I will give you an instance of what occurred in my own case. I went back to do some work on the day before Easter, and my employer came in and found me at it, and he said to me, "You have been at work pretty hard for the last few days," and he gave me a cheque for £10. That ought to show you that I was well treated for the work which I had done. We say that the Bill is worse than useless to us, because it will show the employers that they can work us for longer hours than they do without having to pay for it. In the majority of cases they will see that they can set us to work earlier than they do now, because there is no provision as to the hour at which we are to start. We now have an unwritten law that our hours are from half-past 9 o'clock till 5, or from 9 o'clock till half-past 4. If this law comes into force we shall have to stop work at 5 o'clock, and there is nothing to prevent them making us start at 8 o'clock in the morning. The extra work has to be done at some time, and we might be called up to do it then. With regard to the work which the law clerks have to do, I may say that it is very irregular. In some cases it may be the drawing-up of documents; and if they are required for some case which is coming on in the Court on the next day it is necessary to work overtime. There is a peculiar provision in the Bill, and that is that we can be brought back for overtime work three whole months in the year. That is to say, that we can be brought back on three nights in the week, but only to do a particular class of work which is not usually done by law clerks, and there is no provision for overtime for the urgent work which we have sometimes to do. Finally, I should like to point out that, looking at the provisions of the Bill, it appears to me that it has not been drafted with the object of including law offices, and that it has been only intended to apply to mercantile, banking, and insurance offices, because there is nothing in the Bill which seems to suggest that the draftsman had in his eye the condition of the law clerk. I say that because the provision which is made for overtime would give us less than we get at the present time, and because we should be deprived of many privileges that we get at present. As it is, it seems to me we are not in the class of employees for whom this Bill has been drafted, and that we have been inadvertently included in the interpretation clause in the definition of "office" and "office-assistant."

Mr. L. B. Linklater: Mr. Wedde has put the views of the law clerks so fully before you that there is very little left for me to say. I can indorse everything that he has said. We shall gain nothing under the provisions of this Bill. In fact, it will be the other way. I am engaged in the office of Messrs. Bell, Gully, Bell, and Myers, and I can say that they treat their clerks liberally. We work thirty-six hours a week as a rule, and if there is overtime work to be done the typewriters get 1s. 6d. an hour for overtime, and the engrossing clerks are paid 3d. per folio for paper work and 4d. per folio for parchment. Besides, we get between twenty-five and thirty days' holiday in the year. That is to say, we get more holidays than any other employees, with the exception, perhaps, of schoolmasters and school-teachers. I may tell you, as an instance of the manner in which our employers treat us, some eighteen months ago I applied for six weeks' leave, which was readily granted, and my employers not only continued to pay me my salary during that time, but they gave me a cheque to pay my passage to Sydney and back. With regard to the work in a solicitor's office, I should like to tell you that it is not the same as the routine work which is carried on in merchants', bankers', and insurance offices. It is more irregular. There may be half a dozen cases to prepare for the Court of Appeal, and they all have to be got ready by a certain date. As you are aware, cases to be submitted to the Appeal Court have to be printed. Some time ago there was a case to be prepared in our office which ran up to 795 pages of printed matter, and it took the clerks some considerable time to get the copy ready for the printers. Then they had to correct the proofs and revise, a great portion of which had to be done overtime so as not to keep the printers waiting. The clerks who did that work were well paid for their overtime, and were perfectly satisfied with their treatment. Therefore I think I can say that the law clerks, in Wellington at all events, do not want this provision as to overtime. I have spoken to a great many of them personally, and I can say that there is not one of them that I have spoken to who is in favour of the Bill. There will be no benefit to us under it, and it may possibly lead to friction between us and our employers.

Mr. John Graham: I am employed in Messrs. Bell, Gully, Bell, and Myers's office. My remarks must necessarily be brief after what Mr. Wedde and Mr. Linklater have said. They have laid

before you so fully the nature of the relations existing between the employees and employers in law offices that it only remains for me to indorse the opinions which they have expressed. I need only give you my own personal experience as proof that the statements they have made are true. I have had five years' experience in Wellington in a lawyer's office, and I can say that the relations between my employers and myself have always been of a most cordial nature. As you, of course, know, in most of the legal offices in Wellington a great proportion of the employees are aspirants to the legal profession. It is not like other businesses and trades, because the employees in lawyers' offices know that while they are working for their employers they are also working for themselves, and are gaining experience which will be of great use to them in their profession in after-life. In the office in which I am engaged there are fourteen or fifteen clerks, and I believe that ten or eleven of them are studying to ultimately become members of the profession. Speaking of the generosity of the employers to the employees, I may say that the employers recognise that the employees are desirous of entering the profession. As you are aware, the examinations take place in November, and some time before that the employer will call you in and tell you that if you want to prepare for the examination you can arrange with another clerk, so that he may have the mornings off and you the afternoons, so as to give you as much time as possible to prepare for your examination. A whole week's holiday is given previous to the examination. Then, while the examinations are proceeding (and this is for a period of a week or more) you are not required to go near your office, but you are paid all the same as if you were there the whole time. I think that is evidence that the relations between the employers and the employees in lawyers' offices are of a most cordial nature. With regard to the overtime, I can only say that a certain amount of overtime is necessary in preparing cases for the Court. In the case which Mr. Linklater has mentioned it was I who supervised the printing of the documents, and I gained considerable experience by it. We had twelve compositors engaged for several days in printing the copy, and we had to read and correct the proofs for them. It was absolutely necessary to work overtime on that case, for had this not been done it would have been impossible to have had this case printed in time for the sitting of the Court of Appeal. For this work we received substantial remuneration. I respectfully submit that the passing of an Act by Parliament should be to remedy some evil which exists, and we say that law clerks are not labouring under any hardship, and no evil which requires to be remedied exists so far as they are concerned.

Statement by J. J. McGRATH.

I am employed in the office of Messrs. Young and Tripe. I represent the clerks there. There are six clerks besides myself, and we are all law-students. The only thing I can say with regard to the Bill, in addition to what has already been said, is that we think the Government quite accidentally included us in the provisions of the Bill. I do not think for a moment that they had any idea that we should be included. We assume that the intention of the Government is to remedy an existing evil, and we say that as far as we are concerned there is no evil to remedy. I have had ten years' experience of solicitors and law clerks, six years and a half in the Government service and three years and a half with Messrs. Young and Tripe. In the Government service I was employed in the Native Land Court, and the principal persons who did business there were solicitors and law clerks. During my six years and a half's experience I never met a law clerk who had not as much time to spare as any Government clerk had. If the Committee think that our employers work us like draught horses they are very much mistaken. We start work at 9.30 in the morning and work to 5 in the afternoon, with an hour off for lunch, and a half-holiday on Saturdays; and if members of Parliament, passing by law offices in the evenings and seeing the lights burning there, say, "Here are those poor law clerks being sweated again by their employers," they are under a misapprehension. It is more than likely that the clerks (who have the privilege, without any charge, of using their principals' offices, gas-fires, and libraries at night) are in the offices studying for their examinations, or a clerk may even drop in on any private business. I do not think there is a law clerk in Wellington who is not well paid for the little work he does after 5 o'clock. A man from the country or Australia, or even from Home, may come into his solicitor's office—and, in fact, he very often does—and wants his deeds or other legal documents prepared, so that he may get away by steamer or train at the earliest moment. A principal says to his clerk, "This must be done by a certain time," and if it is not done by the time the client wants it he will go somewhere else where he can get it done. When law clerks go back to do work of this kind in overtime they get 6d. a folio for doing it, and this means at the rate of 4s. an hour for them; and their only regret is that they do not get more of it. Nobody in our office has any complaint to make against the present arrangement; and, as far as I am concerned, I may say that I am much better treated, both as regards payment and hours of work, than I was in the Government service, for there I got only £100 a year after six years and a half's service, and my present employers pay me nearly three times that amount. The principal objection law clerks have to the Bill is that they have not asked for it, and that they do not want it. When they have a grievance which requires remedying by Parliament they will invoke the assistance of Parliament just as quickly as any other body of men. I do not think there is one clerk in Wellington who will say that he wants to be turned out of his office at 5 o'clock, and that he is to get only 1s. an hour if he works overtime. We are doing very well at present, and are satisfied to be left alone. As to our hours of work, no law clerk in Wellington can complain; besides the statutory holidays, he gets a holiday for almost any event in connection with football, cricket, or racing—in fact, every time the Mayor proclaims one. Then, again, a law clerk gets off from work, by an arrangement with the other clerks in the office, for six or seven weeks before an examination comes on, and his principal says to him, "If there is anything not urgent to be done leave it over, and you get away as much as you can to prepare for your examination." Treatment such as this is exceptional, and deserves recognition by the law clerks. We are now treated very decently indeed by our employers, and I hope the Committee will induce Parliament to leave us alone and be unanimous in putting a clause in the Bill to exempt us from its operation.

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.

FRIDAY, 11TH SEPTEMBER, 1903.

Mr. EDWARD TREGGAR examined. (No. 38.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position, Mr. Treggar?—I am Secretary for Labour and Chief Inspector of Factories.

2. Have you seen the Shops and Offices Bill which we are considering?—Yes.

3. What have you to say with regard to it?

Mr. Treggar: I would like, first of all, to explain my position with regard to the Bill. I was instructed by the Minister of Labour to bring down this Bill exactly as it left the House last session, with the exception of a provision for a general Saturday half-holiday. I obeyed those instructions; but there are several things in which I think the Bill might be improved, and I beg most respectfully to be allowed to offer a few suggestions to the Committee on these points. The Bill as brought down was essentially a consolidation Bill, and was one which is very much needed. There have been three amendments to the Shops and Shop-assistants Act of 1894. It was amended in 1895, again in 1896, and again in 1901, so that it makes it very difficult for a layman to read the Acts as they stand. It was therefore desirable to consolidate them.

The first point to which I would call the attention of the Committee is in section 2, the interpretation clause. Under the definition of "office" these words occur: "or professional business or calling carried on therein by the occupier thereof." The Committee has already had before it the evidence of lawyers' clerks with regard to this provision, and I may say, in respect to the departmental view of the matter, that we never understood that professional men and their offices should be placed on the same lines as commercial men and their offices. The work in the offices of architects, lawyers, and other professional men is very different from that which is carried on in an ordinary commercial office. The work in a professional office sometimes necessitates the employee there working all night, and it is made up to them at another time. So far as we have been able to ascertain, the good feeling between professional employers and their employees has never been broken, and it seems to me quite unnecessary that professional offices, such as those of lawyers and architects, should be brought under the provisions of the Act.

Again, in section 2, under the definition of "shop," at the end of the subsection these words occur: "but does not include a warehouse doing exclusively a wholesale business." I have no special suggestion to make with regard to that subsection, but I would bring under the notice of the Committee the fact that it is very difficult to distinguish what are exclusively wholesale businesses. For instance, in country districts there are many places where the grain-stores supply the farmers, and those stores supply the farmers with materials when shops which supply the same materials are closed. I think that is hardly right, and if these wholesale stores supply materials under those circumstances they should be brought under the definition of "shops." In a place like Ashburton, for instance, if a person wants fencing-wire he can get it at a wholesale warehouse when shops which are selling the same material are closed compulsorily. I thought I would mention that fact, because it was brought under the notice of the Committee by one of the Auckland gentlemen who gave evidence with regard to offices being closed on a different day from shops. I would also like to point out that the clerical work which is defined under the heading "shop-assistant" does not refer to a man who is working in an office, or to clerical work in connection with a factory or shop. That work is excluded by the latter part of the subsection defining "office." To put it in a concrete form, Kirkcaldie and Stains, of Wellington, drapers, have an office in their shop, and if the drapers close at a certain time, or on a certain day, that office has to close as well as the shop. The wide use of "office" leads to considerable difficulty, but that difficulty will be cured by this Bill, which provides that it shall not include clerical work carried on in a factory or shop.

Section 3 is a vital section of the Bill. I may mention first that subsection (a) provides that shop-assistants shall not be employed for more than fifty-two hours a week, excluding meal-times. I think that in most of the shops—certainly the respectable shops—they work very little more than forty-eight hours. I want to ask the Committee to consider whether it is wise to fix longer hours—whether it is necessary. The fifty-two hours should be inclusive of meal-times. In factories women work forty-five hours a week. A great deal of the work in factories executed by women is done sitting down, and it is not in many cases more severe than the work which some shop-girls do. I would therefore ask the Committee to consider whether fifty-two hours is not too long. Section 12 of the Act of 1894 provides, "A woman, or a person under eighteen years of age, shall not work for hire or maintenance in or about any shop, nor at any work in connection with the shop, for a longer period than fifty-two hours, excluding meal-times, in any one week, nor for a longer period than nine hours and a half, excluding meal-times, in any one day, except on one day in each week, when eleven and a half hours' work may be done." If we divide the days up we shall find that there are five whole days and one half-holiday, and on one of the whole days a woman is allowed to work $11\frac{1}{2}$ hours, exclusive of meal-times—this is too long. Under the present definition there is no time fixed after which they are bound to start work, nor any fixed hour at which they are to stop work. Under the Factories Act women work between a certain hour in the morning and a certain hour in the evening, but there is no such provision in the Shops Act. I may say that, although in the best class of shops they only work forty-eight hours a week, there are shops in which it is the practice to stretch the hours of work wrongly, and these are the shops with which we have to deal. In my report of 1900 I made these remarks: "In one part"—it is not confined to one part now—"of New Zealand a bad practice has crept in of evading the hours to which women and girls are limited to serving in shops by working them in alternate gangs, as 'watches' are formed on board of a ship. One party of girls goes on at 8 a.m. and works till 11, returns at 1 p.m. and works till 5, returns at 7 and works till 9 p.m. Another party of girls comes on in the same shop at 10 and works till 1 p.m., returns at 3 and works till 7, returns at 9 and works till 11. None of the girls work more than the legal nine hours and a half, but these are dragged out and extended beyond anything contemplated in

the Shops and Shop-assistants Act. There is no possible private time under the system for the recreation and relaxation of the assistant, nor should women and girls be exposed to the dangers of returning home late at night through the temptations and annoyances of a city. A simple provision like that in the Factory Act whereby women and girls are only allowed to be employed between the hours of 7.45 in the morning and 6 o'clock in the afternoon would meet the case." I asked my local Inspector here the other day whether the practice was still in vogue. He told me that it is still in vogue in certain classes of shops. That referred to Wellington; but it is in vogue in other towns in the colony.

4. *Mr. Aitken.*] To what class of shops do you refer?—To drapers.

5. *Mr. Hardy.*] Is that the custom in Christchurch?—I have not made particular inquiries with regard to Canterbury, but I shall be glad to give the Committee definite information within three days in regard to any town in the colony.

6. *Mr. Sidey.* Your report refers to 1900: do they do it still?

Mr. Treggar. Yes. I am not able to state exactly in which towns it is now done, but I know that three or four Factory Inspectors have stated that it is being done. If the Committee desires it I will ascertain where this practice is in vogue. I think, if the Committee could see its way to make the clause relating to the fifty-two hours a week include the specified hour for starting in the morning and that for closing in the evening, it would be of great service. The fact of these girls having to stand the whole time has a very bad effect upon their health. I have here a report with regard to the closing-hours in New South Wales (1903), in which the Inspector says, "A physician informed one of the departmental Inspectors recently that he had then no fewer than ten cases of shop-girls from one city shop under treatment for varicose veins caused by constant standing at the counter. To put it in the doctor's own words, 'One would think they had been at the wash-tub for twelve hours a day. If ever they find a home—well, they will be fit for nothing.'" That is a state of things which I have found all over New Zealand, and I think it points to the necessity of fixing the hours of starting work and leaving off. I make the suggestion as being worth the while of the Committee to consider.

I would next call attention to subsection (2) of section 3, which provides that for the purpose of stocktaking or other special work the working-hours may, with the previous consent of the Inspector, be extended. In the evidence which has been given before the Committee objection has been taken to the necessity for having the previous written consent of the Inspector, but I would point out that unless that previous consent is given it will be impossible to keep any check upon the number of hours that the employees may be kept at work. When we catch them working late they are always taking stock or marking down goods for sales, or doing some "special work." Whereas in the case of factories, where they get a permit beforehand, we know they are working their overtime properly. If the same provision is enforced in regard to shops we shall know that they also are working their overtime properly in stocktaking or any other special work. Then the section provides that this extended work shall be for not more than three hours on any one day. I should like to see the words "on two consecutive days" inserted. At present this extended work may be claimed on any day. It is claimed for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and so on; but we consider that in regard to women—and we have to consider them specially—they should not be called upon to work these extra hours on more than two days consecutively. If a woman has done eight hours' work regularly, and then is called upon to do three hours' extra work on any number of nights, she gets home fagged and worn out. No doubt many of them think they are strong enough to do it, but we know better, and therefore we do not wish that they should have to work three hours' overtime in stocktaking on more than two consecutive days. Then the section goes on to provide that "on every such occasion the shop-assistant shall not be employed for more than four hours continuously without having an interval of at least half an hour for rest and refreshment." I would like to see a provision put in such as there is in "The Factories Act Amendment Act, 1902," section 2, subsection (6), that notice should be given to the employees the day before that there was to be overtime worked, or that meals should be supplied to them while they are working overtime. As it is at present, when a girl leaves her home early in the morning to go to work she has perhaps not had time to take much breakfast. She takes her luncheon with her, and she works on until 5 o'clock; she may then be told that there is more work to be done, and in all probability she has not got a penny in her pocket to buy anything to eat. The Factory Act provides that unless you tell the employees the day before that they will be required to work late the next evening you will have to provide them with a meal, or give them a shilling apiece to provide themselves. I would suggest that there should be a similar clause inserted in this Bill.

I now come to section 7, which provides for the Saturday half-holiday. It was stated in evidence that one of the reasons why a general Saturday half-holiday would work badly was that if there were an invited holiday in the same week they would have to observe the Saturday half-holiday as well. Members of the Committee will probably remember that it was stated in evidence that factory-hands were better off in this respect, because if there were an invited holiday in the week they would also get the Saturday half-holiday. I would say that the factory people are worse off. Factory women and boys are paid for certain statutory holidays whether they work or not, but if they take an invited holiday, then they have to go without pay. The men in factories are in a worse position. If a man in a factory keeps even Christmas Day or Good Friday, or takes an invited holiday, he loses his pay for it unless he has a very generous employer. In a workman's family every shilling counts, and if a man takes one of these holidays he has to do so at the cost of losing his pay. I may mention that there is a half-holiday on an election day, and if a shop has to be closed on that day it can open on another day, but if a factory closes down it loses the day.

With regard to the Saturday half-holiday, I may say, if you care to have my opinion, that it would be quite natural that I, as an official, should wish to leave things as they are. I have been working away at these shops for years until we have got them into a good knowledge of the law. Still, I can see very great advantages if a general Saturday half-holiday should be given. One

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

dodged in every direction. I think the exempted shops should have a special day for closing, say Wednesday or Thursday, or whatever day you like, but let it be one fixed day. I just make this suggestion for the consideration of the Committee.

When the deputation from the hairdressers and tobacconists waited upon the Committee it was stated that hotels sold cigars and tobacco when the tobacconists' shops were closed. Perhaps some do. It is a very debatable question, and I hardly know how to enter upon it. There are a good many restrictions on hotels at present, and it seems to me it would be rather hard on them to prevent them selling cigars on the half-holiday, because those who could not get them there would be able to get them at clubs. At the same time it must be remembered that tobacconists have petitioned Ministers that they may be subjected to a heavy tax in the shape of a license fee in order to protect themselves from the unfair competition which now goes on.

Section 12 provides for a half-holiday for assistants in hotels. There should be a proper time-table supplied to the Inspector, otherwise it would be impossible for any Inspector to get the run of the days on which assistants got their half-holiday. I think the hotelkeeper should give notice to the Inspector of the day on which So-and-so gets his half-holiday. The provision of subsection (2) of section 8 in the Bill is, "The half-holiday to which a shop-assistant is entitled under this section may be on such working-day as, in the case of each individual shop-assistant, the occupier thinks fit." I would add to the provision that notice of such holidays must be communicated to the Inspector, together with a proper time-table, and that there shall be no change of that time-table unless it has been notified beforehand to the Inspector.

Section 14 provides that on the requisition of three-fifths of all the shops in any borough the shops shall be closed at a certain hour. I want to put a very important suggestion before the Committee. I want to turn that section right round, and to provide that all shops shall close at a certain hour unless three-fifths of the shopkeepers ask that it shall not be so. I think that would be fairer, and the shopkeepers would have no difficulty in working it if they desired another hour for closing.

Section 16 defines office hours. Mr. Wedde, one of the deputation from lawyers' clerks who waited upon the Committee, said that some commercial offices opened before 9 o'clock in the morning, so as to get overtime worked early. I think there should be an hour fixed for offices to open in the morning, with, of course, a good margin in respect to the hours of working during the day.

Section 26 deals with the employment of assistants after the prescribed time. I think that if the provisions of section 3 with regard to overtime are properly carried out there will be no necessity for this section.

My last suggestion is that a clause is wanted in the Bill guarding the present awards of the Arbitration Court in respect to the half-holiday if it be made Saturday. There have been a good many awards for carters, grocers' assistants, &c., and I would suggest that hours, holidays, &c., should be maintained during the periods for which they have been given, and then they would fall into a general Saturday half-holiday as the different awards expired.

FRIDAY, 25th SEPTEMBER, 1903.

Mr. F. W. LANG examined. (No. 39.)

Mr. Lang: I am member of the House of Representatives for the Waikato District. The reason for my appearing before the Committee to-day is that I have been asked by my constituents to give evidence in relation to the Shops and Offices Bill. In my district I may say that the people are unanimously against a compulsory Saturday half-holiday. In every portion of the district they have chosen some other day than Saturday for the half-holiday, with the exception of the Cambridge Borough, which for a short time adopted the Saturday half-holiday, and then they found that they were obliged to go back to some other day—Wednesday or Thursday. That is pretty well all the evidence I have to give. I have had a great many communications from people in different parts of the district opposing the compulsory Saturday half-holiday, while on the other hand I have not received one communication in favour of it. The people there generally choose either Wednesday or Thursday for the half-holiday.

1. *Mr. Aitken.*] Do they wish to choose their own day, or would they prefer to have it fixed by statute?—They have not gone into that question in their communications to me. They are strongly opposed to the Saturday half-holiday, and that is the point they wish to emphasize. They do not care so much what other day may be chosen. The gist of the correspondence which I have received is that it is very inconvenient to the people in the district to have the holiday on Saturday.

2. *Mr. Laurensen.*] Which is the largest town in your district?—Hamilton.

3. What is its population?—Under two thousand.

4. Have they a market day?—Well, they have sales on certain days, and that to a certain extent may constitute a market day; but the sales take place on different days in different townships. It is not what you would call a market day from a business point of view. It brings more people into the town, but it is not called a market day. I have no statistics on the subject, but I may say that a great deal of business is done in the towns on the Saturday evening when men come in from their work.

5. Have you any opportunities of judging individually, or are you only giving evidence from what you have been asked by people in the district to give?—I have lived in the district for over twenty-five years, and ought to know something about it.

6. What is your employment?—I am a farmer.

7. Do you speak from the point of view of the farmer particularly?—No; I am appearing before the Committee on behalf of the tradesmen and general inhabitants of the district.

8. Have you had any letters from shop-assistants in the district?—Not directly from shop-assistants. The only representation made to me is that the people of the district are opposed to the compulsory Saturday half-holiday. I have not had one communication in favour of it from any class of the community there.

9. How many are there against it?—Some petitions have been sent to the House against the compulsory Saturday half-holiday, but I cannot say how many signed these petitions. However, the matter was very fully discussed.

10. From where do the petitions come?—Chiefly from Hamilton and Cambridge.

11. From any particular class?—From tradesmen generally. I could not say what proportion of shopkeepers and of shop-assistants signed the petitions.

12. Have you had means of testing the feeling of your constituents on the subject?—I have never made any particular inquiries into the matter, but these petitions show that my constituents are opposed to a compulsory Saturday half-holiday.

13. What is your own opinion? Do you see any objection to it?—Personally, I do not see any objection to the half-holiday on that day if the people wish it, but in my electorate there is no desire whatever for it.

14. Do you see any objection to a *plébiscite* of the people being taken to settle the day for the half-holiday. I should prefer to see it left optional as it is at present.

15. But supposing the district were made larger?—That is a question which I would have to consider. It might be that one portion of a large district would over-ride all the rest.

16. How far are you from a large centre?—From Auckland to the centre of our district is about a hundred miles.

17. Then you are almost entirely a country district?—Yes. There are only two boroughs in it with a population of under two thousand each.

18. *Mr. Kirkbride.*] I suppose your constituents are perfectly satisfied with the present optional system?—Yes.

19. And they wish it to continue?—Yes.

20. *Mr. Tanner.*] Then you are in favour of the optional system?—Yes.

21. Had the farmers any voice in fixing the half-holiday?—I am not sure whether they had or not.

22. Who fixes the half-holiday?—I cannot answer that question. I presume it was done in the usual way.

23. You say that on one occasion it was fixed for Saturday?—Yes.

24. Was that long in existence?—It was kept up for a few Saturdays, and then the tradesmen found that it was ruinous to their trade. I do not know who took part in fixing the half-holiday for Saturday, but they came to the conclusion after a trial of it that it was ruinous to trade.

25. Then the people who fixed the half-holiday for Saturday in the first instance, and afterwards changed it, were not the farmers?—I cannot say.

26. Have you any knowledge of whether the farmers were consulted?—I take it for granted that all the people who have business to transact in the towns were consulted. I have only come before the Committee because I have been asked to do so by my constituents. They have asked me to oppose the compulsory Saturday half-holiday, and no one has approached me on the other side.

27. *Mr. Ell.*] You say you have no objection to a *plébiscite*?—I do not think there would be any objection to it in an electorate, but in saying that I am not speaking with any authority from my people.

28. Do you think that an electorate or a county would be the more suitable area for a vote?—Counties, of course, would multiply the districts, but it is a matter of opinion on which I am not prepared to express myself now.

29. *Mr. Barber.*] Do you think that if the steamer and railway arrangements were made to suit on another day in the week, as they are now made to suit Saturday afternoon, and if there were cheap fares on that other afternoon, it would not be well to have one compulsory half-holiday generally?—That might apply to towns, but I represent a country district, and I can say that it would have no beneficial effect on such districts. I am not desirous of preventing people having a half-holiday on Saturday if they wish it. All I say is that the people in my district do not want it, and the only borough in the district which tried it gave it up.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (1,525 copies), £31 17s.

By Authority: JOHN MACKAY Government Printer, Wellington.—1903.

Price 1s. 3d.]

