

93. In making the inquiry I went to the warehouses and the factories and to the homes of some of the workers. I saw all the principal employers or their representatives, and a good number of employes, some of whom came to my house in the evening and gave their evidence there.

94. The statements were taken down fully, and the material points were embodied in the articles reprints of which are before the Commissioners.

95. No colouring whatever was given to the statements made by the workers, but the statements were simply condensed to avoid tediousness and useless repetitions.

96. In my researches I found nothing that I could call "sweating;" but very low rates of remuneration obtained in many cases, making it necessary that the operatives should work very long hours in order to earn wages upon which they could live.

97. My definition of "sweating" is "the letting-out of work by sub-contractors at a rapidly-decreasing rate of pay;" and I have seen nothing of this sort in Dunedin.

98. If "sweating" means that the people who do the work make next to nothing out of it, then there has been a large amount of sweating going on in Dunedin.

99. In one case I was informed by the proprietress of a factory that she had been induced to lower her charges upon a promise of continuous work; that for the sake of constant work her employes had consented to a reduction that enabled her to accept the terms offered; and that then, on one plea and another, the supply of work became intermittent, and she and her employes suffered in common.

100. My method of procedure was to see the employers in the first instance, and then to hunt up employes, and the only way I could induce the employes to give evidence was by promising not to divulge their names. I made myself safe as to facts by seeing a considerable number of them, and satisfying myself that their statements, which were made independently of each other, agreed in all material respects.

101. I did not find myself at all misled: in the main the statements were mutually corroborative, and I was unable to detect any misstatements or exaggerations on the part of those who were the first and the only voluntary witnesses.

102. I have no doubt that the state of things described in the articles was brought about by excessive and reckless competition. In using the term "reckless" I do not mean to suggest that the employers were at all careless of their own interests, but that they seemed reckless as to whether their employes could live honestly at all on the wages paid to them.

103. I found a reduction of wages occasionally to result from the competition of outsiders to obtain casual work.

104. My observations were confined mainly to clothing- and shirt-factories.

105. I have known girls in factories to take work home to finish, and in making my inquiries when visiting their homes I found them at work at it. They never complained of having to do this, but seemed glad to get it to do, and without it, at that time, they could earn but very little.

106. In some cases, I think the girls I saw working at their homes were fit to be in the hospital. In a great number of cases, however, this class of work was done by girls who preferred it to going to service, who merely wanted to earn a few shillings, and preferred to do this to earning a reasonable salary as domestic servants; and when this class of girls come into competition with those who were obliged to earn their own living, it is unfortunate for the latter.

107. I have been informed, however, of cases in domestic service where things have happened as cruel as anything in connection with factories.

108. The opinion has been expressed that the low rate of wages resulted from the desire of the public to obtain cheap goods. I hold an entirely different opinion. The people who make a profit out of a low rate of wage are the only people who are to blame. It is absurd to suppose that paying 1½d. or 2d. less for a shirt would be any inducement to the retail purchaser; the retailer who sells but a few dozen per week has but little more interest: but to those who give out a hundred dozen or so at a time the difference is very considerable.

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TUESDAY, 11TH FEBRUARY, 1890.

Miss HARRIET MORRISON examined.

109. I am Vice-president of the Tailoresses' Union. I know the object of the Commission. I know the stocking and hosiery branch. I corroborate the evidence of Mr. Spragg. I am a tailoress. Hitherto I have been working in one of the shops of Wood, Scott, and Co.; previous to that, along with my brother—a master tailor—in the firm of Leslie, Lane, and Dobie. I was working on piecework in the factory for a short time. There were other females employed in the shop—about six in Wood, Scott, and Co.'s, and nine or ten in Leslie, Lane, and Dobie's. That is a factory under the Employment of Females Act. My wages were £1 5s. a week in the latter. I have nothing to complain of. The wages range from 5s. a week for apprentices, to £1 7s. 6d. in Leslie, Lane, and Dobie's. In Wood, Scott, and Co.'s, from 5s. to £1 15s. There were about six girls apprentices in Leslie, Lane, and Dobie's. Their ages were from fourteen upwards. They worked from 8.30 to 5.30—an hour for meals. The Act was complied with. The apprentices were not taken on without payment, so far as I know. There was every convenience and plenty of room. We went home for our meals because we lived near enough. We had no complaints to make, so far as I remember. This was about three or four years ago. Since then I have been working for other firms. The wages have decreased since then at Wood, Scott, and Co.'s. The conditions were somewhat similar to Leslie, Lane, and Dobie's. We had no complaints to make. Since then I have been Secretary to the Tailoresses' Union. I am not working now at my trade. I was working for some time at Duthie Bros., and the circumstances were somewhat similar, with one exception, but I do not think it is proper to bring it up here.