

70. Can you give us any idea of the hours of shop-assistants?—There are girls in Wellington who start working at 8 a.m. or 9 a.m., and work on until 6 p.m. They get 15s. a week. I should say the average age would be about eighteen years. Counting girls that go for the first year or part of the first year, they go for very much less than 15s. a week. They get, perhaps, a rise at the end of the first year; but, taking the average all round, from the lowest to the highest, it is about from 16s. to 18s. a week. Of course, there are some women in shops who get very high salaries, as much, perhaps, as £2, £3, and £4 per week.

71. What proportion of girls get under 15s. a week?—I should say about 60 per cent.

72. Then, in the matter of factory-girls, what is their average?—Tailoresses, as I have said, work to a log; there are some who will earn from £1 10s. to £2 a week, if they have full employment; there are others who make 18s., 17s., or as low as 9s. or 10s. a week.

73. What proportion of factory-hands work for under 15s. a week?—I should say 80 to 90 per cent.

78. What effect has this on the social condition of the girls?—Well, it does not tend to raise it; for, if a girl is here by herself, and she has no home, she must pay for a lodging for herself and to live under conditions which exposes her to many dangers which lead to immorality or to an unfortunate marriage; for, in such circumstances, she would probably be easily induced to accept the first offer of marriage.

75. Is there any reason to think that this state of things actually induces to immorality?—It does, I believe; but only to a very slight extent. I think that girls out here have a higher moral tone than girls of the same class in the Old Country. They do not give way readily to immorality for the sake of gain; but there is no doubt that, in a small degree, it does tend that way.

76. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] Coming back to the subject of apprentices, suppose the case of a man having six apprentices. Would it be possible, in such circumstances, for the apprentices to be properly taught their trade?—They would not have the same chance. They would not be properly taught. It takes an adult who is efficient in his trade to teach a boy properly. It is the man who is the teacher, not the employer.

77. Does that point in the direction that there ought to be a limit to the number?—Yes; I think it does.

78. *Captain Russell.*] Would not that affect the number of persons who go into the trade? Would not those who go into that trade now, then go into some other?—Yes; and under the present system it would be better, for we would have more young men who, finding themselves unsuited or unable to get into a particular trade, would push into the country. If we had more young men going in for a country life it would be all the better for themselves and the colony as well.

79. Can you give us the effect on prices that would result?—I think it would tend to raise wages. People would pay better prices.

80. In the case of a man going to build a house, would the contract be affected favourably or unfavourably for the man who has to pay for it?—I do not think it would tend to increase the price. If it did, better workmanship would compensate for any increase.

81. This Act would apply to all registered factories; how would it affect country tradesmen whose trade fluctuates so much in the course of the year?—I do not think it would make any difference.

82. He would perhaps require for the purposes of his business a large number of hands this month and very few the next month?—I think he would have a very good idea of his trade requirements from one year's end to the other. He knows what amount of labour he is likely to want, and he could always get it.

83. Is there any further information that you could give the Committee?—I think that is about all the information that I can give the Committee on this Bill.

*The Chairman.* I know of my own knowledge all the facts which Mr. Mackay has stated, and indeed worse than he has stated. I know that in some of the most respectable shops in Dunedin, in some even of the highest class, they give their young women nothing for the first twelve months, and then only the smallest sum upon which these young persons can barely live; or if the employer has to pay more for special skill, after a while he reduces the amount of wage to less and less, until at last they are starved out altogether.

84. *Captain Russell.*] Is it considered a favour by some of these young girls to get into a factory?—Yes; girls do not like going into domestic service; they mostly all go into shops. There is one place in Wellington which is like a nursery, owing to the number of very young girls who are employed there. These girls are brought together by advertisement in the manner I have stated; most of them are in their first year of service, and get no wages; the person running this place, consequently, gets their labour for nothing.

WEDNESDAY, 5TH SEPTEMBER, 1894.

Mrs. GRACE NEILL, Inspector of Factories, examined.

1. *Hon. Mr. Reeves.*] How long have you been connected with the Labour Department, one way or another, Mrs. Neill?—More than a year.

2. When were you appointed as Inspector?—In March.

3. Since then you have visited factories in Wellington and elsewhere?—Yes; in Wellington, New Plymouth, Auckland, and Masterton.

4. Of course, your attention has been chiefly directed to the state of female workers?—Yes.

5. A very large proportion of these, I believe, are under twenty-one years of age?—Yes; by far the largest.