

are constantly new fashions, and new things for girls to learn in this trade. My remarks as to the dressmakers apply also to the tailoresses, and more especially to the union girls.

25. Your opinion then is that, as a rule, the women-workers are not trained systematically?—No. I think there is great need for technical teaching, and for continuation schools, where they can learn a little more between the time they leave the primary school and go to a trade. They have not enough wide knowledge before they go to a trade. Boys have night-schools to go to, but parents do not care about girls going to these schools.

26. A previous witness stated that, in his opinion, the majority of the women-workers do not earn as much as 17s. or 18s.?—No, certainly they do not; 13s. to 15s. would be nearer.

27. If I said that in my opinion it costs a girl 17s. to 18s. a week to live; that is, supporting herself and clothing herself, would you think it exaggerated?—Not at all, if she is living alone. But girls generally live with their parents, and if they earn 15s. they give 10s. to their parents, and like to keep the other 5s. as pocket-money.

28. They live largely then with their relations and parents?—Yes. I asked one head of a shirt-making factory if she paid any girl sufficient to live on without the aid of her parents, and she replied, "Oh, no!"

29. Then the fact is that the greater part of the female labour of New Zealand is not based on the living wage?—Certainly not.

30. It is then cheap labour?—Undoubtedly.

31. Then factories are carried on on a system of cheap labour?—Certainly.

32. It might be called sweating?—To a certain extent; but the sanitary conditions are good, and the girls are willing to take the low wages.

33. Is there much sub-contracting—that is, letting out by large people to small people, who in turn employ women-workers?—Yes, especially in Auckland, and also here (Wellington). The larger firms take the work, gives it on to a man, and this man lets it out to women. Two or three women get together—two generally—and work. Then, there is a class of unskilled labour engaged in making up shirts and bags for frozen meat. Women get 15s. per thousand here for making these, and 2s. 2d. per gross for coarser sacks. I asked the head woman how many she herself could make in a day of these coarser ones, and she said three gross, which comes to 6s. 6d., and from this 10d. has to be deducted for thread, and by working from eight in the morning till ten or eleven at night. At Wanganui they give £1 per thousand for the bags, but the secretary told me they were pestered every day by women offering to do it for less.

34. That, I presume, is where their time is interrupted, and by home women. They do not have to depend upon their earnings for a living?—Probably not.

35. There is a schedule of wages attached to the Bill, which you have, no doubt, seen?—Yes; and that schedule of wages will reduce the wages of girls everywhere.

36. But it is the minimum?—Yes; but if there is a minimum fixed they get it.

37. You think, then, it is fixed too low?—Yes; 14 per cent. will give a girl under 3s. a week for the first year.

38. Have you not, in striking 15s. as the average, included the youngsters?—No; simply adults; 15s. a week is the average wage.

39. Suppose the Chief of the Labour Department were to say that he had drawn up that schedule on information received, as about the average that he had found paid in the country, would you say that, as far as women are concerned, he had gone too low?—The evil is that, if the schedule goes as it is, it will lower women's wages all through. I have had this from two large employers.

40. It is stated that the large factories are, as a rule, the best conducted, and the most liberal. Does your experience bear out that?—Oh, I think so; almost undoubtedly. I am speaking of the sanitary conditions, not the pay. I think some of the very large factories give very low pay, but the conditions are better, and there are some very beautiful factories in Auckland.

41. As regards low pay and the tendency to sweating, do you find the conditions about the same in the various towns you have visited?—In the country districts the pay is very low; but the girls live at home, and the employers know the families, and if any injustice were done to the girls they would soon let it be known in the little townships; but the pay is miserable.

42. *Mr. Buchanan.* Speaking of the schedule. If I recollect, the schedule is based on a six years' apprenticeship?—Yes.

43. I think you said that a girl might learn the dressmaking in three years?—Yes.

44. That would mean that an alteration in the schedule to that effect would increase the wages?—Yes.

45. I think you said, Mrs. Neill, that girls are not now, as a rule, taught their trade—that they generally leave before completing their trade. At whose instance does that most frequently arise, the employers or the girls?—If the employer has taught her anything, she naturally wants her to stay; but the girls seem rather restless. One employer told me of a girl who left rather than agree to put her hair up, in place of leaving it down.

46. If the girls are not taught their trade, where do the factories get their supply of fore-women from?—A few may keep on, but you know there is no very large supply required. Sometimes you get a girl who has not married early in life, and, perhaps, married women whom trouble has caused to go back to the factory, and there she becomes a fore-woman. In any case, if they stick to work they must learn it in time, for it is all work that any intelligent woman could do if she had any experience of it.

47. You mentioned the price for making bags for freezing companies. It has come within my own knowledge that offers have been made of bags made in England at even a lower rate than is paid now. I suppose these women would go out of employment altogether if these imported bags were accepted?—That depends a good deal on the company itself. I think 15s. a thousand is very little for them.