

the large factories in Dunedin keep their repairing-work by them till the holidays, and the woollen-mills, and so on. They employ between three hundred and five hundred hands. If these repairs were not done at night, then their hands would have to be laid off the next day. Well, we wish to be exempted from the Bill. I would ask that we be exempt from this Factories Act altogether, because it would be quite unworkable so far as our factory is concerned. Our engineers are paid by the hour, and if they bring the hours of labour down they are simply reducing the wages. Some of my men make as much as £10, £15, and £20 a fortnight. The work has got to be done. They are paid time and a quarter for the first two hours, and time and a half for the whole night after that. For holidays they are paid double time. As regards Sundays, if my men start at 12 o'clock on Saturday night and work until 12 o'clock on Sundays, they get forty-eight hours for that, and get as far as 1s. 7½d. an hour. Only some by-hands are the cause of the agitation. I wish to ask that the foundries be exempt altogether from the Factories Act.

Mr. G. A. COLES, Auckland, examined. (No. 16.)

Mr. Cole: I am representing the boot-manufacturers in New Zealand, and also speaking on behalf of the tanners and saddlers of Auckland. With regard to the Factories Act, a "person" under the old Act meant women, children, and boys under eighteen years of age. We think, as manufacturers in the leather industry, that that should remain, and that the men should be left out of the Act altogether. In speaking on the hours of labour being reduced from forty-eight to forty-five, which really means forty-four hours with the hour off for meals, it is the opinion of my trade, and also of the allied trades, that it would be impossible, in face of the competition from other countries, who are working such long hours, to carry on our industries at all. I might tell you, gentlemen, in the award lately given in Christchurch, where I was present at the time, Mr. Justice Cooper's remarks, in speaking on this point, were that the employés did not show in their evidence before the Court why there should be any reduction in the hours, but rather otherwise, as they were in competition with such countries as America, which was working sixty hours, and England, which was working fifty-two hours, while in our colony they were working forty-eight hours. And then there is Germany, Switzerland, and Austria, working from sixty to seventy hours. So the hours given by the decision of the Arbitration Court were that the trade should remain at forty-eight hours. I might say since the Arbitration Court has been formed and these decisions have been given we have no fault to find with the Arbitration Court whatever. In fact, as a trade, we have come to the conclusion that we have received a fair and impartial hearing, that the matter before the Court has been fairly gone into, the evidence given on both sides has been exhaustive, and the decisions arrived at have been satisfactory to the trade as a whole. At first we found great difficulty in conforming to these rules—the competition has been so strong and profits so small. However, we made up our minds to do our best, and the trades have been working under better conditions than for years. We object to any change in the number of hours, because it is impossible to compete with other countries in working shorter hours than forty-eight. There has been no further demand on the part of our employés, and why should there be any alteration unless there is? Speaking for my own firm, I am in touch pretty well with all my own men, and find they know nothing of this Bill whatever. And when the Bill was spoken of in our factory the men were perfectly astonished, and had no desire for any such legislation to take place. In clause 19, Overtime: "The prescribed number of working-hours may from time to time be extended, but not more than three hours in any day or more than two days in any week, or more than thirty days in any year, or on any holiday or half-holiday. On any such occasion a person shall not be employed for more than four hours continuously without having an interval of at least half an hour for rest and refreshment. Every person who is employed during such extended hours under this section shall be paid therefor at half as much again as the ordinary rate: Provided that when the ordinary rate is by time, and not by piecework, the overtime rate shall not be less than sixpence per hour for those persons whose ordinary wages do not exceed ten shillings a week, and ninepence per hour for all other persons so employed; and shall be paid at the first regular pay-day thereafter. The occupier of a factory shall at all times keep a record-book called the 'Overtime-book,' wherein shall be entered a correct record showing in the case of each person who is employed during such extended hours under this section the name of the assistant and the respective dates and periods of such employment. The Overtime-book shall at all times be open to the inspection of the persons employed and of the Inspector. The Inspector may at any time require the occupier to verify the entries in the Overtime-book by statutory declaration in such form as may be prescribed by regulations." In the leather industries and industries affected by importation we have what we call "seasons' trades." These trades are governed, of course, by the demand. We are, therefore, unable to say what is likely to be required very much ahead. Therefore we have what you might call the two slack months in the first season of the year, and four busy months. Our custom has been to keep our business running fully, because when men come to work they like to earn a living. We have never sent an employé away—unless it has been a case of the greatest urgency—from the works. Under this new régime we have found it necessary to lose a few days on several occasions. The old style of thing would be, in the busy season I used to call all hands together, and say, "Look here, lads, we are very busy; it is a question of working overtime." I then told them they could work from 6 o'clock in the morning until 10 o'clock at night if they chose. I left the factory open, and I or my foreman had to be there. That was both for day-workers and pieceworkers. Well, I might say that we did not like overtime. We would not work overtime if we could possibly help it; but we are obliged to meet the requirements of our customers. The limitation of three hours in any one day and to two days in a week, and to thirty days in a year, simply means that we could not work overtime, because it would be impossible to carry on our business on those lines. Overtime means—in New Zealand, where you have to catch boats, shipping from one end of the colony to the