

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-