

## GEORGE DAVIES examined. (No. 9.)

*Mr. Davies :* Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—I represent a different class of trade from most of the other representatives, but I think we are entitled to some little consideration. These gentlemen have said that the largest portion of the trade of the towns is done on a Saturday. With us about the same thing is the case as with them.

7. *The Chairman.*] What is your business?—Hairdresser and tobacconist. I have eight men in my employ, besides myself, and it very often occurs that up to Friday night—I could show my books to prove it—those men have not earned their wages. They have not earned sufficient money to meet the wages-sheet. I have then only the one day in which to let them finish earning enough to pay their wages and give me some little profit. I suppose I am entitled to some profit if I employ that number of hands—I must have something out of them. What I say is a fact, and if at any time any of you gentlemen are in Christchurch I will show you my books to prove it. I suppose I do quite as large a trade on Saturday—in the shop as well as the hairdressing saloon—as I do on any other two days and a half, perhaps three days, in any week. There is another thing about our business that I would like to mention. The hotelkeepers sell a lot of cigars and cigarettes—in fact, I am informed by the merchants in Christchurch that the hotelkeepers buy perhaps four or five times the amount of cigars and cigarettes that the tobacconists do. If they sell the cigarettes and cigars which they buy, that is an injustice to us, for they are open whilst we are closed on Thursday afternoon. Then, in the Bill there is a clause exempting hairdressers. If the Saturday half-holiday is brought about—which I hope it will not be—that exemption will be of no use, because, with the exception of one firm, the hairdressers in Christchurch are all tobacconists as well, and the hairdressing saloon is at the rear of the tobacconist's shop, and therefore we could not have the saloon open if the shop were closed. The people must go through the shop to get to the saloon. There is another point: I do not think it would be much good our having the saloon open on Saturday afternoon if the rest of the town were closed, for then the people would not be in town—the public would not be there, and, of course, we must have the people. We cannot take our stuff out to them, or anything of that kind. Our business is not like other traders'. People do not buy a fortnight's supply at a time from us, or a month's. The people about the town buy from us by the sixpennyworth and shilling's worth, and so on. You must have the people there, otherwise you cannot do the business. I do not think I can say any more. I think the gentlemen here have said everything that can be said with reference to the matter.

## JAMES KNIGHT examined. (No. 10.)

8. *Mr. Taylor.*] May I ask whether you will let us know what you think of this matter from a butcher's standpoint?—I may say, gentlemen, that I represent the butchers, but so much has been said by the other gentlemen that there is practically nothing left that I could say. We butchers recognise that it is proposed to exempt us from the Saturday closing, but we do not—as Mr. Davies said was the case with the hairdressers—see that it would be a great advantage to us. If the town were closed the people would not have any use in coming into town to make their cash purchases. They would not come in for the butcher alone. Consequently we do not see where the advantage would be. On the other hand, if we had to close up on Saturday at 1 o'clock we do not see how we could possibly get through our business. Ours is a perishable business, as you are aware, and if we relied upon customers doing business on a Friday evening, or on any other evening, there is no doubt we should not get the trade that we get now. Our trade is a good deal the same as the others—we do, perhaps, two or three times as much on a Saturday as on any other day in the week. When you come to think about it, Saturday closing means such a hardship on the working-man. Take, for instance, a man who works in a factory, or a man who is a carpenter, or one who follows any other trade: he knocks off at 12 or 1 o'clock on Saturday, and then has a chance to make his purchases, whereas if all the shops are shut up that privilege is taken away. It is really a great privilege for a working-man to be able to make his purchases on a Saturday afternoon. If the working-man was in the position that he had to revert to, we will say, the credit system, and had everything delivered and booked, there is no doubt but that he would have to pay more for it. I think it would be a great evil, and a great inducement for the working-man to take full advantage of that credit, get into debt, and find himself in difficulties, whereas if he pays cash he knows where he is, and spends his money accordingly.

*Mr. Davies :* Might I ask that if this Bill should go through the hairdressers and tobacconists be not exempt, because it would be of no use to us our being exempt.

*Mr. Tanner :* I want to ask a question of all members of the deputation. Mr. Congreve made a suggestion that a ballot should be taken of all the inhabitants of each town so as to fix a day in which all parties would join, whether shopkeepers or not.

*Mr. Congreve :* A ballot of the people of an entire district.

*Mr. Tanner :* We will not attempt to define boundaries just now; I am asking about the principle. Would all the members of the deputation agree to such a proposition?

*Members of Deputation :* Yes.

*Mr. Tanner :* Is that general?

*Members of Deputation :* Yes.

*Mr. Wardell :* I may say that this question has never been brought up in the Wellington Association, as far as I am aware.

*Mr. Tanner :* Do you all think it would be to the advantage of the community if there were a compulsory Saturday half-holiday on which all the shops were closed, when the working-men had been paid and had their money in their pockets, but when the publichouses were open?

*Members of Deputation :* No.

*Mr. Sidey :* I would like to ask the gentleman from the country district, who does not represent the retailers so much as other members, but the Chamber of Commerce, whether he