

knows what the feeling of the retailers in the country is with regard to this matter. From what I gather, many of the arguments of those who have spoken tend to show that the country customers take advantage of the opportunity to go into the cities on Saturday and purchase their goods there. The trade must go somewhere, and it may be presumed that a portion of that trade might go to the retailers in the country towns if the shops were closed in the cities on Saturday afternoon. Can this gentleman who represents a country district tell me?

*Mr. Graham :* Masterton, where I come from, is really a country town, and there is no town outside of it except the other towns in the valley, so there would really be no shops outside, so to speak, except very small shops.

*Mr. Sidey :* Do you mean to say that the country customers come into Masterton?—Yes; and the other townships in the valley. There are no shops outside of them—at least, there are none worthy of consideration. I do not know a single shopkeeper in Masterton but who is strongly opposed to the Saturday half-holiday. It would be inimical to the interests of trade, and such a hardship upon the working-man. I may say that I know of only one shop between Masterton and Eketahuna—one country shop—and the distance is about thirty miles.

*Mr. Sidey :* I would like to ask Mr. Wardell in what way the trial of the Saturday half-holiday was made in Auckland and Christchurch?

*Mr. Wardell :* I think I mentioned that a trial was made in Napier. Saturday was fixed as the day for the half-holiday by the local authority in the ordinary way, but it was found to be absolutely unworkable, and application was made to the Government here to relieve them of the embarrassment they had got into. Personally, I cannot speak of Auckland; I can only speak from hearsay. In Christchurch—Mr. Taylor will correct me if I am not right—the attempt was voluntary. It was a genuine voluntary attempt made by the shopkeepers in the centre of the town, but it was found utterly unworkable by those shopkeepers who tried it.

*Mr. Taylor :* It was not uniform.

*Mr. Wardell :* It was a fair trial by the shopkeepers who made it.

*Mr. Sidey :* Will the deputation tell me where they consider the trade is likely to go if Saturday is fixed for the half-holiday—the trade has to be done?

*Mr. Wardell :* Might I be permitted to reply to that? With the shopkeepers in a large city the trade does not lie about their doors. Their existence depends on drawing trade from a distance. If there is no opportunity given to our customers to come from a distance we might just as well close up and allow the community to depend on the suburban storekeepers. I might instance Dunedin to Mr. Sidey. Would it not be a hardship to compel the public to confine their shopping to shops in South Dunedin by closing up, by the action of this measure, the large shops in Dunedin itself? That is what the effect of this Bill would be. It would militate against the large shops in the centre of the town, which, I maintain, are doing a legitimate business, and can only provide a large and varied stock if they draw their customers from an extended district. If the inhabitants of this extended district have no opportunity of coming into the centre of the cities the shopkeepers' trade there will be very seriously affected.

*Mr. Colvin :* The people will have to pay more for their requirements.

*Mr. Wardell :* Quite so.

*Mr. Aitken :* Are there any shops in Wellington or Christchurch that close on Saturday?

*Mr. Wardell :* John Duthie and Co. do, I think, and one or two of the larger ironmongers—practically wholesale houses.

*Mr. Davies :* No one does in Christchurch, except A. J. White, the furniture-dealer.

*Mr. Taylor :* I would like to ask Mr. Allan whether the volume of the Saturday trade is not largely determined by the fact that Saturday is pay-day? Supposing some other day than Saturday were the usual pay-day, would not the trade be done all the same?

*Mr. Allan :* I do not think that would make any difference, even if it were practicable, which I do not think it is. As an employer of labour I should most certainly object to paying on Friday. Saturday is looked upon as the finishing-day. If you make the finishing-day any other day than Saturday, which is the close of the week, you will find it very inconvenient in the making-up the payment of wages and the balancing-up for the week. You must have a balancing-day. I do not think the fact of wages being paid on Saturday has very much to do with the Saturday trade. Saturday afternoon suits the customers.

*Mr. Taylor :* If the whole of the town and country shops were closed on Saturday, do you still say that the city shops would lose a portion of their present business?

*Mr. Allan :* I believe they would lose a very large portion.

*Mr. Taylor :* Why?

*Mr. Allan :* Because of Saturday being the legitimate half-holiday for country people.

*Mr. Taylor :* The legitimate half-holiday?

*Mr. Allan :* The customary half-holiday. The country people come in on that day to make purchases, particularly suburban people. There are no working-men who could come into Wellington on any other day than Saturday.

*Mr. Taylor :* If they were prevented from coming into the towns on Saturday they would not come in on any other day of the week?

*Mr. Allan :* It would be impossible.

*Mr. Taylor :* Why?

*Mr. Allan :* They have not the time. How would you do if you employed a man in the country and he came to you on Friday and said, "I want to go into town this afternoon"?

*Mr. Taylor :* The argument is that the wage-earning class—or a large section of them—require to have the shopkeeping class available to trade with on the Saturday afternoon: is not that the whole thing in a nutshell?

*Members of Deputation :* Yes.