

18. I do not know what obtains in Dunedin, but I know that in Christchurch the large employers do so?—It may be so, but even in the event of the men being paid on Friday they cannot get their groceries that night, and they cannot get them on the Saturday morning; whereas now they have the Saturday afternoon and evening, and things are rather tempting, and there are sales made that otherwise would never come about.

19. You said that the hotels would remain open if the shops were closed, and that the money would be spent in the hotels. If the hotels were closed also would not that meet one of your difficulties?—It might.

20. And if the cheap fares were on Friday?—That would help considerably.

Mr. WARDELL examined.

21. *Mr. Laurenson.*] You said, Mr. Wardell, that 9 o'clock on Friday night would not be late enough to keep open to enable working-men to get their groceries; would 10 o'clock be late enough?—It depends upon where they have to come from; but in any case they would not go out very much on Friday evening—not as if it were Saturday.

22. You are in favour of closing all shops at 6 o'clock on four days in the week?—Yes; but in some cases it might not be possible to carry that out. It would be right to do so in the large towns, but it would be wise to have an exemption made in country places.

23. I understood you to say that the Saturday half-holiday would increase the tendency to remain open late on other nights: how is that?—Saturday afternoon and evening is the only leisure time that working-men have to buy what they want, and if we have to close on Saturday afternoon there would be a tendency to keep open late on other nights so that they could get what they wanted.

24. You say that there has been no agitation in Dunedin in favour of the Saturday half-holiday?—There has not been agitation in Dunedin; it would drive the trade elsewhere.

25. Then it would go into the country?—Yes; but I do not think Parliament should legislate with such an object as that.

26. *Mr. Barber.*] A good deal is made of working-men not doing their shopping after they leave their work at 5 o'clock. How much would the working-man spend then? Not much. And the ladies do their shopping chiefly in the daytime. Is that not so?—To a great extent; but when the agitation was got up some years ago to close on Saturday afternoon, and we did so, it was found to be very inconvenient; and when we opened again on that afternoon there was general satisfaction. The general opinion was that it was much better.

27. These other conditions of cheap fares and other conveniences would have to be made to suit the half-holiday?—Of course, that might make a difference; and also if the half-holiday were made compulsory all round.

28. You are aware that the trades councils and labour unions are in favour of the Saturday half-holiday?—I suppose it is so; but if I might suggest, I would ask: Is it not quite possible that there is a certain amount of sentiment in that; and that really at the bottom the working-men are not in favour of it? It is only reasonable that the shops should be open for the working-people when they have their half-holiday. It must be made convenient for them.

29. Are not the shop-assistants worse off than the ordinary working-men, seeing that they have to work from 9 o'clock to 6, and have no time to do their shopping?—There are nearly always some shops open on the Wednesday when we close, so that they really have a very good opportunity of doing their shopping.

Mr. MILLER re-examined.

30. *Mr. Sidey.*] You said, Mr. Miller, that you represented about thirty shops in Dunedin. Does that include grocers' shops in the suburbs as well as in the city?—I believe there are some members of our association in the suburbs—in fact, I am quite sure of it. We represent about thirty shops in the city and suburbs, who asked us to come to Wellington to protect their interests.

31. You consider there would be a considerable loss to your trade by closing on Saturday afternoon. Could you tell us whether the volume of your trade is done in the evening or in the afternoon?—I would say both in the afternoon and in the evening. The volume of the trade is done between 3 o'clock and 6 o'clock in the afternoon, and between 7 o'clock and 10 in the evening, allowing for the tea-hour between 6 and 7.

32. I suppose the country customers come chiefly in the afternoon?—Yes; a great many come in from the country in the afternoon, and there is generally a great rush in the trade about 4 o'clock, before the trains go out again.

33. If the Saturday half-holiday is carried, will it take the trade to the country? Supposing the half-holiday is made to apply to both town and country, then they could not buy either in the town or the country?—They can buy in the country on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday.

34. Could they not find some other day to come into the town?—I can only repeat that the week's-end day is the most convenient for them, and in all probability their visits to the town would not be so frequent as formerly if Saturday is made the half-holiday.

Mr. WARDELL re-examined.

35. You, Mr. Wardell, expressed the opinion that there should be absolutely no exemption. I understood you to mean that hotels should be closed. Do you mean that fishmongers, fruiterers, and other shops with perishable goods should also be closed?—I fail to see why there should be any exemption. If this Saturday half-holiday is a good thing, then it should be made to apply to all.

36. It would naturally be a great hardship to compel some of these shops with perishable