

107. Do you wish those shops to be closed?—I think they would benefit rather than otherwise, because a number of the people who come into town on Saturday would do their business with the small shopkeepers on other days.

108. You do not think these small-shop people would lose by not being able to open on the half-holiday when the working-man and his wife go shopping together?—I think they would rather benefit, because the people who come into town on Saturday would then do their shopping on other days, and particularly on the Friday night.

109. I think, Mr. Morton, you said that nine-tenths of the shop-assistants in Wellington are in favour of the half-holiday?—Yes; I say so from the expressions of opinion I have heard. At our meeting there was no objection to signing a petition in favour of the Bill, and the reason there were not more signatures was because many were afraid to sign lest they should get into trouble with their employers.

110. How did you take this *plébiscite*?—By a petition.

111. And you got nine-tenths of the assistants to agree to it?—Yes.

112. *Mr. Hardy.*] I understand the deputation to represent a meeting held at the Exchange Hall?—Yes.

113. And there were about 10 per cent. of the shop-assistants in the town present?—Yes.

114. How was it that the meeting was so small?—I have already stated that a number of the employees would not attend through fear of their employers. A shop-assistant is in this position: that he has no trade of his own, and if he loses his employment it is a very serious matter for himself and his family. Therefore very many did not attend the meeting.

115. Does the reign of terrorism which exists in Wellington exist elsewhere?—I think it is common to all towns.

116. Then, the shop-assistants are all afraid of their employers?—Yes, more or less.

117. Is it not possible for you to form a union so as to prevent that sort of thing?—As I have said, the assistants are afraid to form a union, because they know what would be the result.

118. Could there not be a union of employers and employees?—No.

119. Is not one necessary to the other?—Yes.

120. Is there any reason why the employers should not associate themselves with the employees, the one being necessary to the other?—I am not prepared to answer that question. I only know what exists at present.

121. About these small shopkeepers: were they represented at the meeting?—No. It was a meeting of shop-assistants, and many of the small shopkeepers do not employ assistants.

122. How would it be to their interest if they were compelled to close on the half-holiday?—It would be to their interest in this way: that many of those who now come in and spend the whole of Saturday afternoon and evening in town would not come in, but would go to the small shops in the out-districts.

123. Are you, then, in favour of this half-holiday being made universal?—Certainly I am.

124. Should it not apply to a large number of employments, so that they might be able to enjoy their sport at the same time?—Yes, I should like to see it made general.

125. And the hotels should be shut at the same time as the others?—Of course, I am a temperance man, and I should like to see them shut up.

126. Well, I am not a Prohibitionist, and I ask you the question on broad grounds?—I should say they should be shut.

127. So as to give all employees a holiday at the same time?—Yes.

128. *Mr. Barber.*] The question has been asked whether the shop-assistants would be in favour of taking a vote as to the half-holiday. You would make it applicable to the district, but in that case there might be a difficulty, as some would vote for one day and some for another. Would it not be necessary to have the whole thing fixed for the colony?—Yes, it should be universal throughout.

129. With reference to the shopping difficulty, you said there might be a difficulty to the working-man if there was a universal half-holiday; but it is not absolutely necessary that a working-man and his wife should go into the town on the Saturday, and they could do their shopping in the country towns?—Yes.

130. You say the reason why so many of the assistants hesitate to take part in the movement for a half-holiday is that there is no limit to the number of assistants who could be got. It is not like a trade, and if an employer got rid of an assistant he would have no difficulty in filling his place?—You see, our wages are not fixed by law. We now get £2 or £2 10s. a week, and if a man lost his billet he would have to begin again at £1 10s. a week.

131. They are not so independent as those in other employments, and that is the reason why they are afraid to take any steps in this matter?—Yes.

132. Is it not a fact that, with regard to the Wednesday half-holiday, if there is another holiday in the same week the assistants lose the Wednesday half-holiday, while the factory-hands still get it?—Yes, and we are ready to give them that. What we want is the Saturday half-holiday made compulsory.

133. As the law stands at present is it not a fact that if there is a holiday, say, on Thursday, those employed in factories still get the Saturday half-holiday, but the shop-assistants lose their Wednesday half-holiday?—Yes.

134. With regard to shopping on Saturday night, is it not a fact that there is a certain class who will leave their shopping to the last moment?—Yes.

135. If that was prevented they would buy their things at another time?—Yes.

136. *Mr. Ell.*] In answer to Mr. Tanner you, Mr. Dawson, said that you would have no objection to a referendum to the people in the district as to establishing the half-holiday?—I said I would prefer the provision in the Bill.

137. But you have no objection to a referendum?—No.