

close, as is the case in New South Wales. That would obviate the difficulty which exists at present. With regard to section 9, relating to special holidays, our union objects to Labour Day being recognised in a Shops Bill as a special holiday. In the Arbitration Court there are ten holidays provided for. Of course, the award is only for a limited period. It has now run for six months, and there are eighteen months still to run, and we object to Labour Day being made a special holiday in a Shop Hours Bill. We would ask the Committee to retain the provision which at present exists. We think that the weekly half-holiday should be compulsory, and that the decision as to the day on which we are to close should be left to the local bodies. We strongly approve of section 13, which regulates the hours during which barmaids may be employed in hotels. In regard to section 14, which relates to the early closing of shops in a district on requisition by three-fifths of the shopkeepers in the district, we think that there should be some way provided for registering the signatures of the shopkeepers in a district. We also think that the areas of the districts should be enlarged, that the Road Boards and Highway Boards and other small suburban Boards should be brought into the area when they exist within two miles of the city. We have at present streets in Auckland which belong to three different local bodies—one part to the City Council, another part to a suburban Council, and another to a Road Board, and that leads to an inconvenience which would be obviated by enlarging the area of the district. With regard to section 16, relating to the closing-hours of offices, we suggest that there should be inserted the words "or retail business." It is recognised that there are many retail businesses which close on Wednesday, but have to leave their clerk to do his necessary work, and then he can get away on Saturday. Our union objects to the latter portion of clause 19, after subsection (c). We think that the provisions of that portion of the clause are unworkable and unnecessary. They refer to the case of a ledger-keeper working after time, and we think that the limitation of time is not workable, because the clerk may have made an error in his books, and it would take him longer than is here provided to discover and rectify it. Then, the question was raised, in connection with section 26, whether the assistant so employed would not come under the provision with regard to the payment for overtime. These are the main points that I have been asked to bring before you.

*Mr. Rendell:* Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—I represent the Associated Shopkeepers of Auckland. You will not require to listen to many arguments from me, because I suppose you have listened already to everything that can be said upon the subject. It is a surprise to me that any inquiry should have been thought necessary on this Shop Hours Bill with regard to the Saturday half-holiday. I should have thought that any gentleman who understands the interests of the working-classes would have at once seen that Saturday opening is a necessity for the people, seeing that Saturday has been chosen by them as the universal shopping-day. I contend that no other day will answer the purpose of a half-holiday, when we take the workers into consideration, so well as Wednesday, which has been the half-holiday for eight years, and has been found suitable. I am certain there will be less friction if the Wednesday half-holiday is continued than if this change is made. When persons come into town now they can get what they want on the Wednesday and Saturday. If you make the Saturday the universal half-holiday it will cause great inconvenience to the public who do their shopping on that day. I have here in my hand a summary of the results of a canvass that we, as a committee, made of Auckland and the suburbs. This canvass was undertaken by members of the committee who went out to collect signatures of shopkeepers, and we have got a total of 669 shopkeepers who ask that the present Wednesday half-holiday shall be continued. That is an average of over 80 per cent. of the shopkeepers in Auckland. If you leave out the larger shops in the city, it leaves about 90 per cent. in the suburbs who are in favour of the present Wednesday half-holiday. I may say, also, that in Devonport, which is a small town on the north side of the harbour, twenty-one shopkeepers signed in favour of the Wednesday half-holiday, and nine against it or indifferent. At the Thames there were eighty-one shopkeepers who signed in favour of continuing things as they are now, and there were only eight against it. At Te Aroha twenty-four signed the petition for the Wednesday half-holiday, but we have no account of the number of those who were indifferent or against it. At Onehunga there were thirty for and three against. At Karangahape and Paeroa there were thirty-five for and only one against. In Hamilton there were thirty-five for, and we have no account of those who were against it. We contend, therefore, that as far as the shopkeepers are concerned they are almost unanimously of opinion that things should remain as they are. In the Auckland District the suburbs are very much scattered about; and I wish also to call attention to this fact: that in Queen Street, Auckland, many shops already close on Saturday evenings, and have done so for the last eight years. They find it suits them. The class of people with whom they do business is what you might call the fashionable class, and those shops do not lose any business by closing on the Saturday evening. The people who do their shopping on the Friday are the people who come in to the market. They spend almost the whole day in connection with the markets, and then, having done their shopping in the centre of the town, they go back to the station, and those in the suburbs see nothing of them. As to the Saturday trade, I may say, after twenty years' experience, and knowing the small shops in the suburbs as well as in other parts of the town, and speaking for myself, that on Saturday we do considerably more trade than we do on any other two days in the week. Tuesdays and Thursdays are the other two best days, but on Saturday we do more trade than we do on those two days put together. Sometimes on Saturday an assistant will make up two books of fifty each in sales, whereas on other days you will not have more than half or a third of a book. This shows that the trade of the shops depends to a large extent upon the Saturday work—I mean the small shops and the shops in the suburbs. I spoke to a shopkeeper in the fruit business, and he said he did more business in the five hours on Saturday afternoon and evening than he did in the whole of the rest of the week. If you were to canvass the city, as we have done, and especially the suburbs, you would find that the same remark would be made in almost every shop you went