

week?—So far as our assistants are concerned, they are quite in sympathy with us in opposition to the Saturday half-holiday.

72. Are shop-assistants generally not in favour of a compulsory half-holiday?—I do not say that, because they are largely in favour of it.

73. I understand you to say that a compulsory Saturday half-holiday would be ruinous to trade?—I am speaking particularly about our own trade, and I think it would be ruinous to us.

74. You went so far as to express the opinion that many shops would have to close altogether?—A lot of the small tobacconists depend chiefly on the Saturday business, and they would have to close.

75. Does that apply to your own trade only?—I think the same thing would apply to a large number of trades, and especially among the small shopkeepers.

76. You think so much money would not be spent in tobacco and vegetables, and so on, which would be a loss to the district?—I do not say that. It would be a benefit to the small shops in the country towns, but it would be disastrous to the shops, both large and small, in the city.

77. Then, a less amount of money would be spent?—I will not say that; but it would alter the present position of things, and I can say confidently that the result would be disastrous to our trade.

78. Say a man has wages of £100 a year: if the Saturday was a compulsory half-holiday, would he be able to save money?—I can only speak for my own business, and I say that we would lose considerably, because a great deal of the money which we make is from people who come into town on that day. They would not come in merely to have a shave, because they can shave themselves.

79. Supposing the Saturday were made a half-holiday, then there would be many people who could not spend their money foolishly on the Saturday evening?—I dare say.

80. Then, it is not an unmixed evil?—I think the money which goes into the shops now would go into the hotels then.

81. You think that it would encourage drinking?—I am positive it would, and people who cannot get out of town would spend their money in the same way.

82. *Mr. Wood.*] You said that very often people went out of town, and just before that you said that you relied upon the country people coming into town to spend money in your shops on the Saturday. Now you say that town people could not get out of town?—I say they would not.

83. You object to the Saturday half-holiday because people would get their tobacco elsewhere: where do they get it on the Wednesday?—They get it in the hotels.

84. You do not object to that?—We have given evidence to show that we most decidedly object to it.

85. Do you think that would be done more if the half-holiday were on the Saturday?—Yes, because most people smoke more on the Sunday, and if the shops are not open for them to get their tobacco on Saturday they will get it at the hotels.

86. You think the spending-power would be less?—It would be in our business.

87. You only speak for your own business, and not for the general public?—I can only speak for our own business.

MR. REINHOLD WEDDE, MR. L. B. LINKLATER, MR. JOHN GRAHAM, MR. J. McGRATH, and MR. ROBERT ORR in attendance. (Nos. 33-37.)

*The Chairman.*] I understand you wish to give evidence in connection with the Shops and Offices Bill, and as to the effect it will have upon those who are engaged in your calling. The Committee will be happy to hear what you have to say, but I would ask you to kindly not repeat what a previous speaker has said, as the time of the Committee is precious.

*Mr. Wedde:* I am a law clerk.

*The Chairman.*] Do you represent any particular organization?

*Mr. Wedde:* We had a Law Students' Association, but it has practically gone defunct, partly because the University offices are so far away that we could not use the library. I was secretary of that association at the time that the last petition from law students was sent to the House on this subject, asking for an exemption of the law clerks from the operation of the Bill. I have the petition here, and I may say that it is signed by a large number of law clerks. It is signed by sixty law clerks, who say that they have read the Bill, and also the petition which was sent in previously, and they think that they should be exempted from the operation of the Bill. I sent round a copy of the last petition and the present Bill, so that they might read it, and satisfy themselves as to the position in which they would be placed if brought under the operation of the Bill. The law clerks in Wellington are unanimously of opinion that the views expressed in that petition are correct, and that law clerks should be exempted from the operation of the Bill. A meeting of law clerks was called to consider the position and to decide what steps should be taken. The employers would have nothing to do with it. We thought that we might get a room in one of the offices to hold our meeting, but were told that the employers would have nothing to do with it. Personally, they were against the Bill; but they left it to us to take any course we might think fit. We therefore engaged a room at the Exchange Hall, and when the meeting was held there was only one dissentient voice, and that man has since signed the petition. As was stated in the last petition, we say that law clerks are in a different position from ordinary clerks, and that no legislation should be passed which would interfere with our relations with our employers. The law clerks are well satisfied with their present relations with their employers. They feel that they are well treated by their employers, and that if this Bill is passed in its present form it will possibly lead to friction with the employers, because they will say, "Here are certain hours fixed in which you can only work, and here is a