

taking their fruit away in a paper bag. We have no complaints to make in connection with our employees. We quite agree with the number of hours provided for, and therefore I need not say anything more on the fruit question, except to reiterate that I back up what Mr. Bagley has stated. We have no figures to refer to.

133. *Mr. Taylor.*] Do I understand that the position you referred to was what it was prior to last year's Bill, and that only the shop-assistants require protection?—Yes; we do not want them to work longer hours, but only to assist us when it is agreeable.

A deputation from Newtown attended the Committee.

*The Chairman:* I understand that you have come here as shopkeepers from Newtown desiring to show us how the proposed Shops and Offices Act Amendment Bill will affect you. I shall be glad to hear your statements.

GEORGE BAYLIS examined. (No 37.)

134. Do you represent the association?—I am secretary of the association.

135. How many members are there?—Two hundred and forty altogether.

136. All Newtown shopkeepers?—Yes, Newtown and suburban shopkeepers.

137. About how many are there in the association?—There are about one hundred and fifty financial members, but the others are members who have very small businesses, and we did not like to have them all subscribe although they belonged to the union practically.

138. *Mr. Barber.*] There are a few shopkeepers in Newtown who do not belong to the association?—There may be two or three, but outside one or two all belong to it.

139. *The Chairman.*] Will you, please, make your statement?—The Newtown district is essentially a workman's district. There are about sixteen thousand residents composed mostly of working-class people, and the shops in that neighbourhood are in a small way of business. There are no very extensive businesses there, but there are shops that have grown up to suit the requirements of the working community out there, and the ladies and gentlemen now present will give you their business experience as to the working of the Bill and the effect it has had upon their several businesses. I will not detain the Committee by making a speech, but will simply say that I speak in a dual capacity. I am not only interested in two small shops, but am the proprietor as well, and, speaking from the landlord's point of view, I say the effect of this Shops and Offices Bill has been to send out of business already two small shopkeepers, to my knowledge—people who have not been able to carry on their business simply because they had to close up at 6 o'clock, after which hour they did the biggest portion of their business before the Act came into force. The ladies and gentlemen here represent the various trades of the district. There would have been a much larger meeting of shopkeepers here to-day but for the previous knowledge I had when you first opened your proceedings, when I saw that if there were representatives present of each trade it would be sufficient to give you the information you require.

OSCAR GEORGE AUGUSTUS HARVEY examined. (No. 38.)

140. *The Chairman.*] What is your particular calling?—Bookseller and stationer.

141. Please make your statement?—As already pointed out, Newtown is in a somewhat different position from that of other portions of the city. We have not a floating population, but a population which is away from home the greater part of the day either on business or engaged in labour, and some of them are employed at considerable distances from which it is impossible to get home and do their shopping before 6 o'clock. In respect to my business, the larger portion of it is done in the evening. People come out of their homes and walk leisurely down the street after the day's work is done, and see some book or paper that they would like to have, and perhaps see some thing of beauty for their homes which they come in and buy, and if we were compelled to close at 6 o'clock at night these people would be deprived of this opportunity. There is a principle that should be recognised by all—that no community can live entirely by itself. There must be benefits mutually given, and we must sacrifice ourselves for the benefit of others. While some are working others are buying, and we keep open a little later than others to meet that want. If they come down the streets and find them dark, dull, and dismal—perhaps the only light is the translucent glare of the publichouse—they will not care to come out at night, or would be tempted to drink liquor which is bad for them. But in buying an article such as a book or a newspaper, or a luxury in the way of food, they would be doing no harm to themselves, but would mutually benefit both themselves and the seller. Another thing is, that many people who are in the position of small shopkeepers find that this is the only chance they have of obtaining a livelihood. They transgress so far as to get up to middle age when they find themselves too old and useless to get employment, and the last resource they have is to get into a little business in some way and to pick up some of the crumbs which the large business houses leave after they have gathered in the shakels in the daytime. Some of these small shopkeepers are not able to dig and are too proud to beg; they are not old enough to take advantage of the old-age pension, so what are they to do if they cannot carry on a little business in order to obtain a living.

142. Will you show us how the Act will prevent them from getting a living?—If this Act is enforced and they have to close at 6 o'clock their means of living will be taken from them, and where they will be cast to Goodness only knows. Another thing is that the small shopkeepers protest against it as a matter of principle, as an unnecessary interference with their liberty. There is really no reason why a man should be prevented from working if he has a mind so to do. It seems to me that legislation of this kind is destroying the manhood of the colony, and it is legislation for children rather than for men and women. Surely these people know best how to carry on their business. We object to be made mere automatic machines and compelled to close at a certain hour at night. If everything is to