

those in the suburbs fully two-thirds of their business is done after 6. It affects the suburbs more than it does the town tradesmen. Another reason is that the hotels almost throughout the whole colony sell tobacco the same as we do, and they are exempt from this Act. There is no restriction whatever on their hours of selling, and they do equally as big a business as some of the tobacconists do, and we do not think it is fair that they should conduct the same business as ours and not be restricted. We do not want to interfere with their business, but we do not want ours interfered with by the Shop Hours Bill: that is the main point. We do not object to the fifty-two hours a week for the assistants, that is fair and reasonable; but we do not want to be brought under the operations of the Act with regard to early closing: that is our principal objection. With regard to the hairdressing department, we have come to an agreement with the men under the Arbitration Act, so that that will not be affected by the Shop Hours Bill. I think it is before the Court at the present time.

8. The Act would override that?—We could not speak in regard to that until we have a conference with the men. We do not want to be brought under the Act with regard to early closing; it would mean absolute ruin for a lot of suburban men. In Symonds Street, Ponsonby, and Newton, all our business is done after 6 o'clock—it does not commence till after 7 o'clock. How are they to get their living if they have to close at 6? It is absolutely impossible.

9. Really what you ask is, that you should be able to keep your shops open as long as you wish?—Yes, fifty-two hours a week, but the assistant not to go off at 6 o'clock—fifty-two hours by mutual arrangement. The amended Act is only clause 3 disguised. It is no use to any tradesman.

10. *Mr. Alison.*] What hours do tobacconists work?—Thirty-two and a half hours a week on the average; they have to work on shifts. It means that if we have to close at 6 o'clock we shall have to reduce our staffs by one half.

11. Why?—They would come to work from 8 to 6, and put in the required number of hours; but at the present time we work two shifts, and that averages about thirty-two and a half hours.

12. During what period of the day is the greatest volume of business?—After 6 o'clock in our particular line.

13. Is that the experience of all tobacconists?—Yes, beyond any doubt.

14. You claim exemption from the operation of the law entirely in regard to early closing?—Certainly.

15. Do you suggest any hour for closing?—No; we have had quite enough interference with our business, and we want to be able to conduct our business as it suits us and pays us.

16. Has the Shops and Offices Act been enforced in the Auckland District?—Not with regard to ourselves.

17. There has not been an enforcement of the law in any one instance?—Not with regard to tobacconists.

18. Before this early closing became law did you hear any objections from any employees with respect to the hours and conditions under which they were working?—No, I am certain of that. Our own men have asked for fifty-six hours before the Arbitration Court.

19. Did they make any application or express any discontent at working at night?—Not the slightest. The men have got common-sense, and they know very well that they must be there when the work is to be done.

20. Is there any one in the trade, as far as you know, in favour of fixing the hour for closing?—I have not heard so. We could not, because what would suit Queen Street would not suit Symonds Street.

21. In your opinion, is it essential for the requirements and convenience of the people that tobacconists' shops should be kept open as at present?—Certainly.

22. That is prior to the law being brought into operation?—Yes, that is our opinion.

23. *Mr. Hardy.*] You are in favour of shortening the hours of labour, I presume?—We have never lengthened them.

24. Do you not think in this age of labour-saving appliances you might fairly well shorten them?—We are agreeable to the fifty-two hours as stated in the Bill.

25. And even if good reason could be shown, you would not object even to having them further shortened if they could be?—I would for one, because a man could not earn the money in the shorter time; the men must earn their wages.

26. You think fifty-two hours is sufficiently long for a man to work?—Yes, there is no doubt about that.

27. Are you in favour of the owner of a shop working longer? Have you to work longer hours?—Yes, we have to work longer than our men very often.

28. Is it fair that you should work longer than your men, and by that means place him at a disadvantage?—It does not place him at a disadvantage, because my men would knock off at a certain time, and I would work on later, but I would not start at the same time as them in the morning.

29. Do you really work any longer than fifty-two hours?—No, certainly not.

30. *Mr. Aitken.*] You are speaking as to the suburbs: do you find in the heart of the city that it is absolutely necessary to keep open after 6 o'clock?—Yes, absolutely necessary.

31. *Mr. Tanner.*] You say men cannot earn their money in less than fifty-two hours, and that they have common-sense, and yet you say yourself they work thirty-two and a half hours?—My tobacconist's assistant, I mean. I have two sets of assistants; men and women.

32. You have no wish to keep any of them after 6 o'clock?—Yes, certainly.

33. *Mr. Sidey.*] I understand you object to section 21 of the Act?—Yes, we do object. It is not fair for us in the main part of the town to close, and it is unfair for those in the suburbs to have to close—business is different in the different parts of the city.

34. *Mr. Laurenson.*] What time do the assistants start?—One starts at 8 o'clock in the morning