

78. You want a special clause in the Act to deal with Auckland ?—If the people all agree in Port Chalmers, that suits them.

79. They say they want statutory closing ?—We say we do not.

80. You want a special clause to deal with Auckland ?—No.

81. You are aware we have to frame our laws : you say you do not want it, and they say they do ?—Put a special clause in dealing with Port Chalmers only.

82. Then, with regard to closing up, clause 21 provides that a majority of the shopkeepers in any particular trade or all trades fix, say, upon 7 or 8 o'clock at night, and they ask that that shall be enforced by law, and you object to that ?—Yes, I would.

83. They approve of clause 21 in Dunedin ?—I cannot speak of Dunedin. I am only speaking of a place I know something about. I have been in business in Auckland for ten years, and it suits my business to be open in the evening.

84. But we have to legislate for the people generally ?—I do not think the shopkeepers have asked for legislation. I understand a petition has been before the Committee from Wellington shopkeepers signed by 175 out of nine hundred-odd, and I will guarantee that a hundred of those have always closed at 6 o'clock, and therefore that leaves seventy-five against eight hundred who are opposed to it. I cannot speak for Dunedin. In the suburbs of Auckland we strongly object to being dictated to as to when we shall close.

85. *Mr. Alison.* You are here as representing a large proportion of the shopkeepers in the suburban portion of Auckland ?—Exactly.

86. And you are here representing their views. Have you communicated in any way with the people in Port Chalmers, Christchurch, or Dunedin ?—No, sir.

87. Has there been any communication, as far as you know, by those you are representing with the shopkeepers of those towns ?—No, not that I am aware of.

88. You are here voicing the opinions of those who sent you to represent them ?—Exactly.

89. And you make no suggestion as to how the law should operate in other places ?—No.

90. Do you say that the shopkeepers in other parts should be allowed to be subjected to the same conditions as the shopkeepers at Auckland ?—Yes.

WALTER HILL examined. (No. 53.)

91. *The Chairman.* What are you ?—A wool-buyer in Christchurch.

92. Whom do you represent ?—I am representing the members of the New Zealand Wool-buyers' Association. [List of names produced.]

93. You represent the whole of New Zealand ?—Yes.

94. Do you wish to make a statement ?—Yes. The wool-buyers come from all parts of the world. I think there are forty-five members of this association, and their arrival here begins in October, and continues up to the sales commencing towards the end of November. The volume of business they do throughout the season amounts to close on £2,000,000, and the volume they have done during the past season amounted to about £1,825,925, and the number of bales put through was 172,411. The various items are set out in the statement : *Totals as per broker's catalogues* (average, £12 10s. per bale) : Christchurch—First sale, 3,567 bales ; second sale, 17,183 bales ; third sale, 20,319 bales ; fourth sale, 3,451 bales : total, 44,520 bales, £556,500. Timaru—First sale, 5,877 bales ; second sale, 13,030 bales ; third sale, 3,689 bales ; fourth sale, 491 bales : total, 23,087 bales, £288,587. Dunedin—First sale, 5,429 bales ; second sale, 12,924 bales ; third sale, 6,113 bales ; fourth sale, 1,327 bales : total, 25,793 bales, £322,412. Invercargill—First sale, 6,594 bales ; second sale, 5,056 bales : total, 11,650 bales, £145,625. Wellington—First sale, 1,702 bales ; second sale, 5,197 bales ; third sale, 8,363 bales ; fourth sale, 2,578 bales : total, 17,840 bales, £223,000. Napier—First sale, 7,403 bales ; second sale, 8,378 bales ; third sale, 2,637 bales : total, 18,418 bales, £230,225. Auckland—First sale, 2,000 bales ; second sale, 3,500 bales ; third sale, 1,000 bales : total, 6,500 bales, £81,250. Grand totals, 147,808 bales, £1,847,599. *Totals as published by Loan and Mercantile* : Offerings both at auction and by private treaty, 172,411 bales, £2,155,137 10s. *Volume of business to be dealt with* : Actual sales, 146,074 bales, £1,825,925. This amount represents the hard cash paid by members of the Wool-buyers' Association during the wool season, irrespective of £10,955 11s. paid for delivery alone, besides railage and port dues. If this Act is going to remain as it is, and the offices are going to be closed at 5 o'clock in the evening, our difficulties are going to be increased to a very great extent. We think it is going to seriously interfere with the business. I would like to mention a few of the details as to how the business is done, and point out some of the difficulties we have to contend with at present, and show how the enforcement of the Act will cause serious loss to the colony and the farmer. The buyer will suffer as well, but he has an interest he is easily capable of looking after, and he will make it up by taking it out of the raw material, because whatever he pays for the raw material, he will take into consideration in taking cost of putting it into the finished article. The bulk of the business done by buyers represented by me is done by auction sales. These sales are arranged with the consent of the brokers by the buyers, and they are held at various places throughout New Zealand, per list handed in. They have to be held at such times as the buyers can get to them, and time must be allowed for travelling between Napier and Invercargill. You will notice by the lists that we hold sales at 7.30 in the evening, and if the offices are closed at 5 o'clock these sales cannot be held, as clerical assistance could not be employed. Therefore, we should have to practically reorganize the whole system. I am speaking mostly with regard to buyers coming from England, the Continent, and America, as local buyers are usually at home with their work. Some local buyers travel through the colony with the English and foreign buyers, but not all of them. The business of these buyers who are travelling from north to south has to be conducted to a very great extent by telegram. Therefore, if a buyer arrives in any place after 5 o'clock at night and wants to communicate with his office, and his office is closed, his business must wait till next day.