

4. *Mr. Tanner.*] What section of the Act are you referring to in dealing with that point?—Clause 18, I think it is. But it comes under the Factories Act as well. I am not quite sure which clause it is here, but that is the grievance—that between one Act and the other they are labouring under that difficulty. Then there is another matter. The proviso to subsection (1) of clause 21 enacts that “no requisition shall be acted upon by the Minister unless the local authority has certified that the signatures to the requisition represent a majority of the occupiers of all the shops within the district.” Now, it does not appear clear from this Act what the local authority is. It may be taken to be the delegates that are appointed for the purpose of fixing the day of the holiday, because there is no local authority. Where a combined district is in existence there are various local authorities within that combined district. It appears to me as if it requires a better interpretation of the term “local authority.” I do not know that this is a point to which I was instructed to call attention, but it is one that has occurred to me. Then there is another point. There are certain offices which are exempt from closing at certain hours, and they are specified in the Act. The building societies think that they ought to be exempt too, because, from the nature of their work, they require to have their meetings, and their officials are required to be in attendance, later than the hours which the Act allows. The officials have to be in attendance at an hour that suits the people after they have closed—after they are obliged to close. That is the only suitable time at which they can go and make their payments, and in order to have these payments made some one must be there to take them; but the officials of the societies—the property, investment, and building societies—are not allowed to be there, according to the Act.

5. *The Chairman.*] So you ask that building societies be exempt?—Yes, along with the freezing companies, shipping companies, and others enumerated in the list of exemptions. I think that is all I have to say.

DONALD REID examined. (No. 68.)

6. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—A solicitor, practicing at Milton.

7. Whom do you represent?—The Bruce Property, Investment, and Building Society.

8. Will you make your statement please?—This institution has been in existence for about forty years, and we are advised that we come within the provisions of the Shops and Offices Act. I do not think there can be any doubt about it. If the opinions of the best lawyers in Dunedin are to be regarded, a building society comes within the four corners of the Act. It would scarcely be workable in our case to be subject to the Act. Our society, like all other similar institutions, was inaugurated in the interests of the working members of the community. Members of the Committee will know that the only means many of them have of making a home for themselves is by the aid of building societies. Nine-tenths of our shareholders are working-men. We hold our meetings, and have always held them, on the first Tuesday of every month, and subscriptions are taken between the hours of 6 and 8, after the day's work is done. Our secretary receives a salary, but of course he is not solely employed in that work; it is only an adjunct. We feel that unless we are exempt it might lead to inconvenience, and it would not be in the interests of our workers if any hindrance were put in the way of their paying their subscriptions after office hours. Under these circumstances I would ask that you add at the end of the proviso to section 23 of last year's Act the words “and the offices of property investment and building societies.”

9. *Mr. Tanner* (to *Mr. McQueen*).] The difficulty that you alluded to in the early part of your evidence applies, I suppose, to Invercargill only, as far as you know?—No, it must apply to the other main boroughs.

10. To the four large cities?—The four large cities are provided for.

11. What other boroughs?—There is Oamaru, there is Palmerston North—.

12. Take Oamaru. Has Oamaru any adjoining borough or local authority contiguous to it?—I could not tell you from personal knowledge, nor of any others, except Invercargill.

13. We will speak of Invercargill. I can see the difficulty with regard to the others perhaps in time to come; but you are particularly acquainted with Invercargill?—Yes.

14. Do you mean that you would extend the provisions of the Act so that Invercargill would become with its adjacent boroughs a combined district in the same way that the other four are?—Of course, according to the Act, the Governor requires to declare the combined district.

15. He *may* do so?—Possibly.

16. Has he done so?—No.

17. Suppose he did, then I suppose you would be in pretty much the same position as the other four large centres?—In exactly the same.

18. And you wish that the chief borough in the group—that means Invercargill—should have a controlling majority on the board of delegates in the same way as they have in the cities?—Just the same. The same reasons exist.

19. Otherwise you are afraid that the representatives of suburban and adjoining boroughs, if these were equally represented, would outvote the Invercargill delegates, and force on a majority of the shopkeepers, by a majority of delegates, what they did not want?—The great majority—I suppose 80 or even 90 per cent.—of the shops are in the main Borough of Invercargill.

20. You referred also to section 18, about which I am not very clear. The section states that where people are employed in a place which is both a shop and a factory, they shall be separated, and they, apparently, shall have their holiday on that day which applies to the factory or to the shop, according to whether they are chiefly employed in the factory or the shop?—Yes, but I do not know that section 18 meets the point I was alluding to. That refers to where they are employed in both branches; but take such factories as Herbert Haynes and Co., in Invercargill: it is a factory under the Act, and it is really a factory, but there is also a shop, and there are employees who are wholly employed in the one, and others employed in the other branch. They are obliged to have their holiday on a different day.