

21. So that it leads to closing a portion of the building on two half-holidays?—Just so. The employees cannot go for a picnic or a holiday together, except with the connivance of the Inspector.

22. Would this meet the case of your people—if an option were given to them to close the entire building, factory and shop, on one half-day or other, but not on both?—That would do it.

23. *The Chairman.*] You say that in Invercargill the Inspector does not enforce the Factories Act as far as the Saturday half-holiday is concerned?—I could not make that charge. It would be unfair for me to make it, because that is not of my knowledge. I could only give it as hearsay. What the employers say is that they do not care about having the system of giving the holiday on the same day carried on on sufferance. They want to have legal authority, so that they will know what they are doing.

24. Have you any establishments at Invercargill where there is a factory connected with a shop employing, say, one hundred and twenty hands?—I do not know what the number would be in Herbert Haynes's, but there would be a good many.

25. Three or four times as many in the factory as in the shop?—I should think so.

26. In a case like that, do you think it would be fair to compel the factory hands to give up their Saturday half-holiday?—Of course that is a different matter.

27. We can understand the hardship in a small shop where there are perhaps two tailors, or one or two dressmakers; but we have in all the large cities establishments where there are perhaps two hundred employees in the factory and only twenty in the shop?—That is quite true, but this point then arises: They might adopt a system that would be disastrous to their employers—very likely would, if they closed on the market-day, on which the country people come in. If they were compelled by the employees to close—

28. It is not the employees—it is the statute?—Yes; but I mean if it were left to the employees to elect whether they would close on Wednesday or Saturday.

29. In any case, where you have such a shop as I speak of, with perhaps forty in the shop and eighty or a hundred in the factory, would it be fair to ask the factory hands to give up their Saturday half-holiday?—There is something to be said in favour of that.

A deputation representing the Christchurch Butchers' Association attended.

*The Chairman:* I understand that you gentlemen represent the Christchurch butchers, and that you wish to make a statement on their behalf with regard to the Shops and Offices Bill. I shall be glad if you will make your statement as fully as you wish, but as our time is very limited, and we have other witnesses waiting to come in, I would ask you not to overlap each other more than is unavoidable.

JAMES KNIGHT examined. (No. 69.)

30. What are you?—A butcher, of Christchurch.

31. Do you represent the Butchers' Association?—Yes, we represent the whole of the butchers of Christchurch, with the exception of two or three small butchers.

32. Do you represent the butchers in the suburbs?—Yes, and Lyttelton too.

33. Are you president of the association?—No; Mr. Steel is.

34. Will you just make your statement in your own way, please?—I have not much more evidence to give than we gave last year. What we as butchers want is this: We are under an arbitration award, and that suits us very well; and we would like to continue to work under that award.

35. What does it provide?—Fifty-six hours per week. Of course, certain wages which are allowed are on a rather higher basis than that of any other trade on account of the hours being so much longer.

36. We will not touch the wages question. The award, of course, does not compel you to close your shop at any particular time?—No.

37. What time do you think would be a fair hour at which to close your shops, if we were to deal with that?—We close at 6 o'clock, and the trade is well satisfied to close at 6. Where the Shops and Offices Act touches us is the provision that a shop shall not open before 8. In our particular trade it is necessary to open before that. Some people start work between 5 and 6, and others between 6 and 7. At my shop we start at 7 because it suits us. What we want is to work in with the fifty-six hours.

38. What time would you suggest for opening, then—any?—No; we would not like to be restricted to any particular time as far as opening is concerned. With meat being perishable, and different trades being required to work in a different way, it would not be workable at all to fix the hour for commencing. To show you how that would not work, I would point out that there are some butchers who do their own carting. It is necessary to cart before they can send the meat out in the shop, and they have to start fairly early. As I say, it suits some to start at 7 and some at half past 6. What we do is to run in as near to the time allowed as suits us, but we are generally slightly under the fifty-six hours per week. Six o'clock suits us very well for closing on week-nights, and 1 o'clock on Thursday. Since the Shops and Offices Act has been partly enforced we have tried to close at 9 o'clock, but it has been very inconvenient. The other Saturday night I had a visit from the Inspector. He was standing outside the shop at about 9 o'clock. At 9 I had about twenty customers in my shop, and he came in at about seventeen minutes past and asked how it was we were not shut. I replied that if he would show me how to get shut with these customers in the shop any quicker than I had been doing since 9, and if he would get them out of the shop, I should be pleased. It was just when we were getting the shop clear that he came in, and then we put the shutters up.

39. What you really ask, then, is that you should have no restriction at all placed on you as far as opening is concerned?—Yes.

40. And that you should not be restricted to employing your assistants less than fifty-six hours and you say you are satisfied with 6 o'clock closing as far as your trade is concerned?—Yes.