

has been made by a very small minority of interested people, who eventually will say the law is a very good one. To carry the clause now proposed will strike the man who employs two or three assistants. It will strike him out of existence, unless some plan is adopted to overcome the difficulty by doing what one speaker has stated will be the case—viz., taking assistants into partnership. This would simply mean that you would be opening the door to fraud. I have a small establishment in which I employ two assistants—a branch establishment. If this suggested amendment of the Bill became law, I should have to close that shop; but, at the same time, if I made up my mind I could keep it open with the assistance of my partner; or I could admit a young man into partnership and keep the branch shop open, or I could keep the two shops open. In making such a provision for the benefit of the assistants only, I think you are doing wrong. As one speaker has already said, employers require the rest as much as the assistants. If the clause is passed it will be a great injustice to those who have a small branch business in the outlying districts, as well as to those in the city. Whether clause 3 has been carried out in its entirety I am not in a position to say with authority, but I hold a power of attorney for a person who owns a small shop, and that shop used to keep open till 11 or 12 o'clock on Saturdays, and 8 or 9 other nights. His returns have not decreased, and he now closes at 9 o'clock at night on Saturday and 6 o'clock other nights, and has not suffered from it. He does a small grocery, drapery, and baking trade, and since the shop has been closed early, the returns, instead of going back, have increased; whilst alongside of him there are two shops which have kept open. I contend that every working-day is provided for in the Act, although it has been stated that it is not so.

ALEXANDER VEITCH examined. (No. 79.)

13. *The Chairman.*] Are you a member of the firm of Veitch and Allan?—Yes, drapers of Cuba Street I wish to refer to some of the evidence given by previous speakers which might possibly be misunderstood by the Committee. I know they did not intend to urge that the whole of clause 3 of the Act should remain as it is. That is, of course, for you gentlemen to deal with. What they wanted to say, and what was emphasized by Mr. McLeod, was that we are here representing a particular trade, and so far as this trade is concerned, we urge that clause 3 should remain.

14. That is, with the words struck out in the second and third lines?—Yes. What we desire is that there should be complete uniformity in closing without exception in any given trade. I can also say something of what has occurred in Sydney, where a similar Act is in force. A resident there has informed me that when the Act was first enforced in Sydney there was a very great outcry against it in the same way as there has been here. Numbers of people who had been doing a certain amount of business in the evening by keeping open after other people had closed, thought it was going to ruin them. The authorities on the other side had a stiffer back than appears to be the case here, and did not give way, and the consequence is that people have settled down to the new regulations, while those who made the biggest outcry now state that they would not on any account go back to the former condition of things. That is all I wish to say.

15. *Mr. Hardy* (to Mr. Carey).] How many hands do you now employ?—Eleven.

16. How long have you been in business?—Two years in Wellington.

17. How many hands did you employ when you started?—Nine.

18. And you observed 6-o'clock closing?—Yes, from the start.

19. You consider it a hardship because the law proposes to permit those who only represent themselves—say, a husband and wife—to keep open?—I do. I think there should be no exemption whatever.

20. Do you not think it would be a hardship to these small people?—No, I think we should be all on the same footing. There should be no difference whatever.

21. If it injured the small shopkeepers, you would not advocate that?—No, but I do not think it would injure the small shopkeepers. Take the Newtown people, for instance, they would soon know that they must shop before 6 o'clock. In the past, some of the shopkeepers have been able to work their hands in shifts. Instead of bringing them on at 9 o'clock in the morning they brought them on later and kept them at work later.

22. It has been stated in evidence on behalf of the Newtown shopkeepers that if what you propose is given effect to they will lose their business?—I do not think it for a moment.

23. And that the working-people who live there have to come to the city to work, and do not get back until 6 o'clock or about 6; so that if the shops were compelled to close in Newtown they would lose some of their business?—I do not see that for a moment. The working-people generally go home from work to get cleaned up, and do not shop at that time. Besides, the working-people generally shop on Saturday.

24. As a general rule it is not the working-man who does the shopping?—No, it is his wife as a rule.

25. You do not think it would be a hardship to them if the shops were closed at 6?—I do not think it would be a hardship to any one.

26. I presume your expenses in a large business mount up to a considerable sum?—Yes, much more than in a small shop. We have to pay big rents and big salaries, because the living-expenses are so great.

27. What is the ordinary rate of pay for a departmental manager?—From £4 to £5 per week.

28. And for junior hands?—We cannot get any one under £2 a week for junior positions.

29. And you do not wish to keep open to make more money?—We do not want to keep open after 6 o'clock. We want rest after that. When the Saturday-night closing came into force we received notice in the morning that we had to close that night. On the day we received the notice to close at 9 o'clock we had a tremendous amount of growling about it, but on the next Saturday and the following one the trade gradually eased off again. Then the Premier let us off the new regulation, and we again kept open until 10 o'clock, but the trade did not come back at once—it gradually came back. Now, however, since we have had to close at 9 o'clock, we find that a few minutes after 9 the trade