

57. And your experience is derived here in the city ?—Yes, and in the outskirts.
58. What outskirts ?—Brougham Street.
59. You said that you hold a power of attorney for the owner of a shop whose returns have increased since the shop has been closed early ?—Yes.
60. And yet you said immediately afterwards that two adjoining shops were keeping open and you thought it unfair ?—Yes.
61. Do you think that they would keep open if by closing their returns would increase ?—They have not got the pluck to try it, and, unfortunately, the Act has not been enforced.
62. Do you think they would do better if they closed ?—I think they would do just as much business.
63. (To Mr. Veitch.) How many hands do you employ now ?—Forty or fifty.
64. How long have you been in business in Wellington ?—Twenty-five years, or thereabouts.
65. Did you ever keep open after 6 o'clock when you first started business ?—Yes.
66. At what time did you close as a rule when you first started ?—It is so long ago that I almost forget. I kept open as long as we could do any business.
67. If you had been deprived of the evening trade so long as you were doing business after 6 o'clock, would you have been so successful as under existing conditions ?—It is difficult to say. If I had been asked the question then I have no doubt I should have said it would ruin me to have to close up. But with my larger experience I think it would not have hurt me.
68. But your knowledge in those days would have enabled you to answer that question ?—I have now the knowledge I had gained at that time and the larger knowledge I have since gained, and, putting the two together, I do not think it would have hurt me.
69. Do you really think that if you had been compelled to close at 6 o'clock when you first started business twenty-odd years ago, and for five years after you had started, say, you would have worked up to the same successful position you are now in ?—I do not think it would have made much difference, if any. As a matter of fact, when we first started we did close at 6 o'clock for a period in the first premises we had, but in Tory Street we kept open late, because I lived on the premises and it was convenient to do so.
70. Do you think the same conditions which prevail in the city trade apply to the suburban trade ?—As a matter of fact, from my experience suburban shops in every part of the world keep open late—at least some of them do. It has been a practice for people starting in business with perhaps a small amount of capital to try to make headway, and they are willing to keep open day and night to make their business a success, and if they take a few shillings after other people have closed, well it is something to the good, and, naturally, they look to taking every extra penny they can.
71. And do you not think it is necessary for people who start in a suburban district to keep open late in order that they may work up a business ?—That is not the point. My point is that there should be uniformity of treatment in every particular trade—that the law should treat them uniformly.
72. You say that the bulk of the suburban people keep open late: are not the conditions under which suburban people live altogether different from those of the city ?—I do not think anybody keeps open for the convenience of any one else. The shopkeepers keep open for the benefit of their own pockets.
73. It is for the convenience of the public, which makes it a benefit to their pockets. Take a large city: there is not a large trade done in large cities with a shopping population at night ?—Oh, yes there is. In the largest city in the world certain shops keep open all hours.
74. That is for the benefit of the pleasure-seekers ?—No; there are shops that close early and shops that keep open late in London.
75. I mean in your own trade ?—Yes; you will find one shop without any compulsion closing at 1 o'clock on the half-holiday.
76. I mean the night trade ?—Yes; you will find shops keeping open till 10 o'clock, or as long as there is a person on the street.
77. You think that the small men could succeed in suburban districts without keeping open for the evening trade ?—That is another point of view altogether. What I said was that there should be uniformity in the law in its application to every one engaged in a particular trade.
78. You mean that every shopkeeper throughout the colony should be compelled to close at a certain time ?—I am speaking for Wellington only—I say nothing about the country.
79. What I want to find out is this: do you think that the same conditions which are suitable to a city trade apply with equal force to a suburban trade ?—I do not see that it would make the slightest difference.
80. *Mr. Sidey* (to Mr. McLeod.) I understand that you represent all those that employ assistants ?—No; there is one who does not, but the others employ assistants. We represent the bulk of the trade. I think we represent the whole of those who employ assistants. I was guarded in using the words "bulk of the trade."
81. Those trading in the city and the suburbs ?—I should say chiefly in Wellington, although I have a branch in Newtown.
82. Is there only one whom you represent who does not employ assistants ?—I can only say there is one.
83. To what extent did those you represent close at 6 o'clock before clause 3 was enacted—all those present ?—No. For instance, I selected certain seasons of the year during which I did not close at 6 o'clock—say within one month of Christmas. That was before clause 3 was passed. Mr. Lees kept open all the year round. He was very anxious to close at 6 provided those around him closed at the same time. Business is a matter of competition, by which it is regulated.
84. It is the drapers you represent ?—Drapers and clothiers.