

114. But that is not mentioned in the resolution, is it?—It says that the assistants shall work fifty-two hours per week, and that the hours on each day shall be arranged between employer and employee.

115. I wish to make that clear, because I understand the chemists throughout the colony work together, and that is what they ask from other centres—practically the same as that—that is to say, that on every night of the week they shall be permitted to bring their employees back, if necessary, so long as the hours per week are limited to fifty-two?—That may lead to evasion, because I do not think it would do for a chemist to start his assistants at, say, 10 in the morning in order that he should work them every night in the week. I do not think it would be fair to the assistants.

116. If we fixed it by statute that the employees shall be away two hours on two nights per week, would you keep a book to show when an assistant commenced work and when he left off work?—I do not think that would be impracticable. I think it could be done, if necessary.

Statement of ARTHUR HOBSON, Chemist, Wellington. (No. 82.)

*Witness :* It has been the habit of the Wellington chemists to keep open till 9 o'clock for many years past, but for three months at the end of last year and at the beginning of this I closed my pharmacy at 8 o'clock, with a number of other chemists. I found business as good during that time as it was previously. My business is in the suburbs, amongst a residential class of people, and I do what one would call a family trade—that is, I have a fair number of prescriptions each day, and I sell a good few patent medicines and a great number of sundries. The people are able to procure all their requirements before 8 at night. I live on the premises, and the medical men know it, but I must say that in the evening I have not been called up for very many urgent prescriptions. That will show that it is quite practicable to shut at 8. With regard to assistants, it would be quite satisfactory to have the assistants working fifty-two hours a week, provided their hours could be arranged between the employer and the employee, because we might wish to get our assistant back on some particular night and would like to have the opportunity of bringing him back when required. I think it would be quite practicable if we had a book showing the hours the assistants were employed. I would like to emphasize the fact that we wish to keep our half-holiday intact. We do not desire to have any provision for chemists keeping their shops open for urgent medical appliances, or that sort of thing, because there are some chemists who would take advantage of that and keep their shops open on the half-holiday as well as the other days. We would like provision made for closing the shops in the afternoon and reopening from 7 to 9. I find that from 7 to 9 in the evening on the half-holiday there is a great deal of business doing, and it seems necessary there should be provision for reopening.

Statement of FREDERICK CASTLE, Chemist, Wellington. (No. 83.)

*Witness :* I would like to emphasize the necessity of having assistants back after 6 o'clock. A great deal of a chemist's business is prescription-work, and many prescriptions come in between 6 and 8. If a chemist is not allowed to have his assistants back after 6 there is danger of his making a mistake in making up his prescriptions by having to attend waiting customers. That appears to be an important point in regard to the assistants. I think the fifty-two hours a week could be adjusted so that employees did not work more than nine hours on one day. That, I think, should be left to you to fix. With reference to shop hours, I am in favour of closing at 8, because I feel that to be off between 8 and 9 would be of great benefit to us, and would increase our efficiency, intellectually and physically, for that last hour takes it out of us more than any other hour of the day, and from experience I find that the whole of the business—that is, all reasonable business—can be done by 8 p.m. Exceptional cases are liable to occur at any time. For this reason I am in favour of closing at 8 o'clock. I would like to say this with reference to Wednesday: Under the last Act, I think chemists are allowed to keep open at any time after 1 o'clock for dispensing prescriptions, and there is no provision for opening between 7 and 9, as we have been doing. We would like it fixed so that we should have to close at 1 o'clock and reopen from 7 to 9 in the evening.

GEORGE EDWARD ELSON, Chemist, Wellington examined. (No. 84.)

*Witness :* There has been a little opposition on the part of a few members of our association as to asking for 8 o'clock being made the closing-hour. I have a requisition here, which has been signed by a few of the chemists, and which I would ask permission to read.

117. *The Chairman.*] If you will hand it in that will do. I will see that it is printed with the evidence?—Yes. I have, also, a few remarks bearing on the requisition which I had intended to read to you.

118. Very well. Will you give us the pith of the requisition, and then make your remarks?—The requisition is addressed to you, and reads as follows: "We, the undersigned chemists of Wellington, while approving of the limit of fifty-two hours' work weekly for chemists' assistants, desire to bring under your notice the inconvenience that would be caused both to the medical fraternity and the general public should an Act be enforced compelling chemists to close before 9 p.m. A large number of chemists do their principal dispensing business between the hours of 8 and 9 in the evening. The hour of 9 p.m. has been generally recognised by both doctors and chemists as a reasonable time for closing, and we consider that the nature of our business entitles us to a little latitude in this respect." Then follow the signatures of G. E. Elson, 79, Courtenay Place; Charles A. Fletcher, 4, Willis Street; R. M. Green, Taranaki Street; John Castle, 15, Riddiford Street; Robert Charles Brien, 108, Cuba Street; H. Brittain, Manners Street; A. A. Waters, for Mrs. M. A. Mackenzie, Thorndon Quay; and David Thomas Orr, Lambton Quay.