

selling rabbits has been the means of throwing out of employment a dozen or twenty men who were trapping for the trade. We consider that selling rabbits in the shops also tends to keep the rabbits down in the country. I might say that if we are not allowed to sell rabbits it means a big financial loss to our concern. We wish to be exempt from all the provisions of the Act.

134. You want exemption from the Act altogether?—Yes. Ours is a peculiar trade. There is no regularity about it. We take fish from the fishermen, and they might be one week and not catch anything, and then have another week of favourable weather. We have to work our trade to suit requirements. The fish trade is not a large business, and there are not a large number of people employed by others. Most of the shops are run by the proprietors or their families, so that it does not affect a large number.

135. *Mr. Bollard.*] You claim exemption altogether under the Act?—Yes.

136. Supposing a fishmonger was exempt and there was no definition other than the word “fishmonger,” he would not be able to sell rabbits or poultry?—He would not, unless the definition was widened.

137. You said just now that the word “fishmonger” was all you wanted put in?—In clause 15 it says “A ‘fishmonger’ means a person whose business is to sell fish or shell-fish.”

138. If you had not a better definition than that, you would not be able to sell rabbits?—No; we want a wider definition so that we should be able to sell rabbits.

139. And poultry?—No. Poultry would be too wide, and people who sell poultry would probably want to come under the same clause. Wellington fishmongers do not sell poultry, but rabbits have always been a part of the trade, and I think that if we had the right to sell rabbits only, speaking for myself, I should be satisfied. I do not think any of the fishmongers are anxious to go in for poultry or game.

140. Supposing you are not exempt under the Act, at what hour in the very hot weather is it necessary that you should open in the morning?—We always open at 6—from 6 to 7; people have to be served with their breakfast fish. We have better facilities for keeping the fish fresh. It comes in on the previous evening, but they do not care to have it delivered then because, as I say, they have not the same facilities that we have for keeping the fish fresh.

141. Is 6 o'clock early enough?—Yes.

142. How about people going away by boat at 6 o'clock and wanting their breakfast earlier than that?—I do not think any hotel in Wellington serves breakfast before 6 or 7. At the Royal Oak you cannot get anything before 7.

143. Are you working the assistants under any award?—No, there is no award in the fish trade, because the fish business is a peculiar trade. There may be two or three days on which there is nothing for the men to do, and then two or three days when there is a good deal to do.

144. What time do you work your assistants per week?

145. *The Chairman.*] How many hours?—About nine or ten hours a day.

146. For six days in the week?—Yes.

147. *Mr. Bollard.*] Do you consider that is a fair thing?—A very fair thing.

148. Sixty hours a week?—Yes. Of course the men are paid proportionately. We pay a good wage. Our men are paid from £2 10s. to £3 10s. a week.

149. Would not the hours of the butchers suit you?—No, because fish is more perishable than meat, and the butchers can regulate the supply. We do not know for five minutes what fish we are going to have. Once it is in our sheds—I am referring to the wholesale department—it must be cleaned. We cannot knock off till the work is done.

150. But you stated just now that sometimes you were a whole day without doing anything?—Just so. Then we let the men go away.

151. How many hours do you work your men sometimes, in order to make up the sixty hours if on some days they do nothing?—I have been in Wellington now for about seventeen or eighteen months, and in no instance have I worked them more than eleven hours.

152. Eleven hours a day?—Yes.

153. Could you make up the time, if they are for days doing nothing, if you did not work them more than eleven hours?—We pay them so-much a week.

154. How do you make up the sixty hours if there are days when they do nothing?—I was only averaging it. We work about sixty hours a week.

155. Sometimes you must work the men twelve hours in a day?—That might be so in odd instances—two or three in a year, or something like that, but not more than that. The average is about nine hours a day.

156. But you told us just now that they worked sixty hours a week?—You asked me if I thought sixty hours would be a fair thing.

157. But afterwards you said you worked them sixty hours. That is an average of ten hours a day?—That would be the outside time. Of course we do not keep the time. We pay the men so much a week.

158. *Mr. Kirkbride.*] I understand you to say that the fishmongers desire to be exempt?—Yes.

159. And you want the definition of “fishmonger” to be something different from what it is at present?—We should like that.

160. At present it reads “A ‘fishmonger’ means a person whose business is to sell fish or shell-fish”?—That is so.

161. You wish the definition to be enlarged?—So that we can sell rabbits.

162. So that you sell fish, shell-fish, and rabbits?—Yes.

163. Anything more?—We would like game and poultry, but we would waive that if we could get rabbits.