

man's labour and his hours, and pay him accordingly; but let everything else alone if you are going to make this people a nation. I know that if we shut at 9 on Saturday night it will mean a big falling-off on that night only; but that does not affect me; I am against the whole principle. The whole principle is absolutely wrong. If I shut at 10 on Saturday night, and do not do the ordinary trade then, I know perfectly well that my income-tax will be less, and the other expenses. The gentlemen who are around this table do not know, unless they are in trade, what trade expenses mean. As an instance, I might mention that I got a bill in the other day for £8 15s. for accident insurance. Well, I know there are men round this table who can bear me out when I say that when you have to insure a working-shoemaker against accident it is like insuring the moon. That is only one of the expenses that we have to put up with. If you are going to say to the shopkeepers that they must shut up, their business will not be able to stand it.

JOSEPH METZ, Pawnbroker, Cuba Street, examined. (No. 7.)

*Witness:* I might state that a very large percentage of my business is done after 6 in the evening—I should say fully 50 per cent.; in fact, our business is done principally with the poorer class of persons, and after they knock off their work is the only time they have to transact their business. I carry on my business with one assistant, and the hours do not press at all heavily on him. He works from 9 o'clock in the morning till 12. He gets off from 12 till 2, and comes on again at 2 and remains till 4; he has two hours off from 4 till 6, and then he remains from 6 till 9. He has the usual Wednesday half-holiday, and innumerable whole holidays during the year; and I find that the working-hours are not by any means too many. I might say that, as far as I am concerned, I should be very pleased if I could do my business between the hours of 10 and 3. It would suit me very well indeed; I do not like work. But I find that the bulk of my business is done in the evening between 6 and 9, and if I have to close at 6—well, my only means of escape will be to dispense with my assistant and work the shop entirely by myself, which I certainly do not wish to do. I do not suppose any man keeps long hours for the sake of keeping them; it is really that necessity forces it upon him. The expenses in business are very large, and owing to the competition people have to avail themselves of every opportunity if they wish to pay their way; in fact, it is the only way that a man can keep his head above water. I hope very sincerely that this clause 3 will be withdrawn from the statute. I cannot give you any particulars as to the reduction in my business, because I have not been closing at 6—not from any spirit of obstruction to the law, but I have been under the impression—in fact, we got legal advice—that according to the Act under which I was licensed I was entitled to keep open till 9. I have acted on that legal advice, and have kept open till 9; but, as I say, fully 50 per cent. of my business is done between the hours of 6 and 9 o'clock.

SAMUEL GEORGE ROSS, Jeweller and Engraver, Willis Street, examined. (No. 8.)

*Witness:* I am a native of New Zealand. I learnt my business as an engraver in Wellington, and I have been in business on my own account for the last seventeen years, exclusive of three years, when I was in America. For the first twelve years I had no stock, but during the last few years I have been gradually increasing my stock. I now have one assistant and one factory hand. The hours of my assistant are any time between 10 and 4, and up to 9 o'clock on a Saturday evening. The assistant is my sister. She has a month's holiday every year on full pay. I have one factory hand, and he comes under the factory laws. His hours are from half past 8 till 5. He also has a month's holiday—a fortnight at a stretch, and the other fortnight subdivided throughout the year. He is on full pay while having the holiday. My business place is in close proximity to the wharf. I do a large business with the floating population. I reckon that there are from seven hundred to a thousand people daily at the Queen's Wharf and the Glasgow Wharf, the class with whom I do my night business. They are quite a different class of people from those I meet during the day. I also do business with the arrivals off the express trains in the evening, and the people who stay at two or three large hotels which are in the vicinity of my shop. My rent, I might say, is extremely high for such a small shop; I pay £15 3s. 4d. a month. I pay this excessive rent in order that I may keep in touch with the wharf people and those off the trains, and those who stay at the hotels to which I referred. There are a good many tourists staying at these hotels, including the different operative and dramatic companies that come round, and their custom is well worth getting. I might state that more than five years ago this Shops and Offices legislation was brought under my notice by the Hon. Mr. Shrimski, and he advised me to get up a petition and approach the Premier, which I did. We waited on him over five years ago. I want to emphasize this, because it has been stated that there has been no indignation meeting or deputation in opposition to the provisions of the Act until lately. I say there has. We approached the Premier on this matter five years ago, and we had a petition signed by over a thousand people and 450 shopkeepers. In the year when the Premier was in England the Legislative Council was approached, also Sir Joseph Ward, and we emphasized this as much as we possibly could. I think it was about that time that the widows came to be spoken of, which the other party has made a good deal of capital out of. We would also have made a strong protest against this present Act had we known anything about it. We were all in sympathy with the Bill as it left the House and went to the Upper House—or the majority of us were. We had no objection to it; we rather approved of it. I was in touch with one of the members of Parliament, who told me that this obnoxious clause 3 was not in the Bill, and I informed him as soon as I knew the clause had been put in by the Council that we would approach the House immediately. I got a hint about it some four days before the Bill came back to the Lower House. I stopped the Hon. Mr. Rigg in the street, and asked him if it were in, and he could not tell me. He said, "I am Chairman of the Labour Bills Committee of the Upper House; I am in a confidential position, and I cannot give you any information about it; but you will see about it from the newspapers in a day or two." In speaking about Mr. Rigg I should like to say this:—