

150. Did the state of things improve after the shops had been closed at 6 for a time?—No; the trade in that particular line has become worse. The people go to the theatres and the hotels, instead of buying a magazine and going home to read it.

151. You would say that a person who had been in the habit of taking, say, the *Nineteenth Century*, knocked it off because he could not get the magazine after 6 o'clock?—Yes.

152. Do you ask the Committee to believe that?—I ask the Committee to come down to my shop, and I will show them piles of magazines which they are welcome to accept.

153. As to your general business, did your takings continue the same as they were during the first week, or have they improved as you have gone along?—They have fallen off; because the trade done at night has principally been done with the seafaring public—people who come in by boat and train after 6 o'clock, and the only opportunity they get is to come down at night and purchase, as they are off again early in the morning. That trade is lost now.

154. Have you inquired from any other booksellers whether they have sold the same number of magazines? These are generally ordered by number?—Yes, so-many of each. Mr. Shand made the same statement as I did—that he had not been able to sell his wares, and, like cherries, unless the magazines are sold when fresh, they are no good.

155. After you closed, what have your takings been for the consecutive weeks since the first?—We estimated the reduction to be 25 per cent.

156. Did you suffer a greater falling-off in the first week?—I am bound to admit that the first week of closing at 6 was the worst week.

157. Say it was 50 per cent. the first week, it would be a much lesser amount last week: have you made a comparison?—I have really not made a comparison. I did not come prepared with figures; I was asked to come here very shortly before the meeting; but I know that the unsold stock tells its own story.

158. The point is that time is doing its work. When the general public get accustomed to early closing and know that they can only buy what they want during certain hours they will suit themselves, will they not?—The same conditions hardly obtain in Wellington that you find elsewhere. The trade that is done at night you do not see in the day. It is done with people who arrive at night principally and depart in the morning. People come off the ships and the trains, and the shops being open they buy what they want and are off by the early train in the morning. We do not get these people in the daytime at all.

159. You argue that booksellers require special treatment, that they should be exempted?—I am not asking for any special consideration on our account; but I say that what affects me must affect others. I am not really asking you to pass any special legislation on the bookseller's account; I have not been authorised to do so.

160. You say that there are special circumstances attending your business which do not apply to other businesses?—That is so.

161. Then you would like to be put among those exempted on that ground?—I do not like any restriction at all.

162. But supposing there were to be restrictions?—Make it as late as possible, because, as some other speaker said, it frequently happens that the whole morning goes by and we hardly see a customer.

163. Do you sell much between 11 and 12 at night?—We are not open as late as that.

164. At what time do you close?—I am never open later than 11.

165. What would be the percentage of your sales between 10 and 11 o'clock?—It is a fairly good run of trade, because the theatres and the hotels turn out then and the people must take something home.

166. *Mr. Tanner.*] If the hotels could be brought into line with the shops a great deal of this difficulty would disappear, would it not, Mr. Brown?—I have no doubt. It would nearly settle the business.

A deputation from the Wellington Shop-assistants' Association attended the Committee.

*The Chairman:* We understand that you represent the Wellington Shop-assistants' Association and wish to give evidence with regard to the Shops and Offices Act Amendment Bill now before the Committee, more especially dealing with the hours of labour. We do not wish to restrict you to the four corners of the Bill, and desire to have a general statement from you. We only ask you, as far as possible, not to overlap one another in your evidence. We shall be glad to hear you.

WILLIAM HAMILTON, Secretary to the Wellington Shop-assistants' Association, examined. (No. 19.)

167. *The Chairman.*] Are you an employee of the association?—Yes. The association consists of members, male and female, and a president, vice-presidents, and committee.

168. About how many members are there?—A total of 303 are on the register. The general and executive committees have met on several occasions recently for the purpose of framing a circular which embodies the requirements of the Shop-assistants' Association. I have a number of the circulars here, in which there are only seven clauses. I will go through the circular—it will only take a few minutes—and make a few comments on each clause. We are here to represent the committee, and the committee represents the whole of the association. These clauses are the basis of our requirements. Clause 1 says, "Duration of employment not to exceed fifty-two hours weekly." That speaks for itself, and I do not think there is anything unreasonable in that clause. Clause 2: "Shop-assistants not to be employed in any shop after 6 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, and not after 9 p.m. on Fridays, and 1 p.m. on Saturdays." We want to keep strictly to these hours. Any extension would be injurious to the health of shop-assistants, as a large proportion of them, as you may know, go to lunch at 12 o'clock, get back at 1, then work from 1 to 6, which is five hours' constant employment without any food. If that hour were extended by half an hour, that would mean five