

ment-room keepers, chemists, and *bona fide* retailers of fruit and fish), urge the Government to enforce provision 3 of "The Shops and Offices Act, 1904," and consider such action necessary to the general welfare and health of ourselves, our families, and assistants." I pasted the following on the inside cover of the book containing the signatures: "I witnessed and can testify to the genuineness of all the signatures of this petition."

173. *Mr. Aitken.*] Those who are opposed to clause 3 told us there were two hundred shopkeepers in Wellington who were in favour of it. You have the names of only 175?—We have a great many more than that in favour of it, but after the Act was enforced it was not necessary to obtain further signatures, or the list would have been larger. The Government said they were going to enforce the Act. It is estimated that about two thousand hands (shop-assistants, clerks, &c.) are employed by the shopkeepers who have signed this list.

174. *Mr. Ell.*] How many refusals did you have in your round of the shops, roughly?—I could not tell you how many. The restaurants, tea-shops, bakers, and confectioners, fruiterers, fishmongers, dairies, sweet-shops, tobacconists and hairdressers, and ham-and-beef shops were not called upon to sign, and they form the bulk of the people who have not signed this list. I have learned from different sources that these people consider they ought to be exempt in some way or other from the early-closing hours.

175. *Mr. Tanner.*] Do you think they should?—I am only looking after the interests of the shop-assistants. Personally, I think refreshment-rooms and tea-rooms should be allowed to keep open as long as licensed hotels, and that the public should be given the opportunity of getting tea and coffee as long as they can get beer. I should like to see all restaurants licensed.

CHARLES HAYWARD IZARD, President of the Shop-assistants' Association, examined. (No. 20.)

176. *The Chairman.*] Will you make a statement?—I have been asked to say a few words with regard to the question of Saturday being the statutory half-holiday. The association had every hope last year that Parliament would fix upon Saturday, and I believe that but for the opposition raised by the country there would have been no difficulty whatever in Saturday being fixed as the day. But when it was found that there was a very large number of the members of the House against the Saturday being fixed, and that they were chiefly in favour of Wednesday in country places, we suggested that the fixing of the day for the half-holiday should be left to the electors of the four large cities to decide. The position of the cities and of country districts appeared to us at that time to be somewhat different. A country district might have several towns in it which might have different market-days, and probably it would be awkward for them to have one particular day fixed as the half-holiday. But in the four large cities the interests are practically the same, and it seemed to us and to some members of the House perfectly reasonable that the electors of the four large cities should have the right to say which should be the day on which they should shop. Now, we do not want the question referred to the electors if we can possibly avoid it. The shop-assistants desire that Saturday should be the day. They contend that Saturday is the natural half-holiday, if there is to be a half-holiday at all. If the day which precedes Sunday is the day upon which all the mercantile offices, workmen, and everybody else in New Zealand who have a half-holiday enjoy their half-holiday, it is only natural, I think, that those who are employed in shops should, if possible, enjoy their half-holiday upon the same day. The difficulty with regard to the question of payment of wages on Friday has nothing in it, because nearly all the large concerns pay their people on that day. I am certain that Mr. Barber's large company does. The Harbour Board, the Union Steamship Company, the City Council, and the Railway Workshops all, I think, pay on the Friday. I think it was found that some three thousand employees were paid on that day, and that was found to be the case without any careful scrutiny to see what some of the smaller places did. Therefore, I think there would be no difficulty about the payment of wages on the Friday. I am quite sure the association I am president of have no desire to ruin or prejudice anybody, but if Saturday becomes the day we shall be in exactly the same position as we are with regard to early closing. A great many people who were opposed to early closing prior to the enforcement of the Act are now, since the Act has been in force, in favour of it. I will mention a concrete case, because the gentleman can be called. Mr. Lloyd, jeweller, of Lambton Quay, was very bitterly opposed to closing at 6 o'clock. He and I have had many little words about it, but after clause 3 had been enforced he told me he would be just as pleased if it always remained so. He said that he was very doubtful whether, if clause 3 were repealed, it was going to do him any good. That only goes to show that when statutory enactments are enforced, and people begin to work in harmony with them, there is not the loss, or suffering, or misery anticipated. I might say, generally, with regard to new clause 3 of the Bill, that I suppose it is apparent that it means that the shop-assistants may be employed fifty-four or fifty-five hours a week, because under this they can be kept half an hour after the time prescribed.

177. *Mr. Tanner.*] It is an increase in the number of hours?—You can increase the time for twenty-nine minutes every day.

178. *Mr. Aitken.*] But the shop cannot be opened: the assistants can be kept there?—It is as bad, I apprehend, to be kept in the shop as it is to be kept selling stock.

WILLIAM HENRY LAVELLE examined. (No. 21.)

179. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—An accountant.

180. Are you an officer of the association?—I am honorary treasurer of the Shop-assistants' Association. I have been asked by my colleagues to speak upon clause 4, section (3), on page 3, which deals with the payment of overtime. Section (3) of clause 4 says that for the purpose of stocktaking or other special work the assistant may be asked to work three hours a day thirty days in the year, and later it provides for the payment of overtime-work. It appealed to us that the provision for the payment of overtime was placed on the statute-book for the benefit of the assistant, but unfortunately it worked