

who keeps the prices down?—Yes, that is the tendency all over the world. It is so in the United Kingdom, too. It is a pity perhaps that we cannot form a league to buy from the small shops.

310. That is what we want to guard against—the driving of trade into the hands of the trusts and combines?—Yes.

311. And you will have to be very careful, because instead of improving your own position as workers you will be making it worse?—I can assure you our assistants are in full sympathy with the small shopkeepers, and I do not know how it is that some of the newspapers say that we are not in sympathy with them. I think 6 o'clock is a little too early for them.

312. *Mr. Davey.*] Do you know any firms that were in the habit of giving their assistants holidays who now declare that they will not pay them for the holidays if they pay them overtime?—I have heard from assistants that their employers are not going to give them any holidays. There are three firms with something like four hundred hands. There are a great many houses who do not give holidays, but give sick-pay.

313. You know of firms whose assistants have been so told?—Yes, I can give the names if necessary.

314. Do you know of any firms who have not so said?—I know of no firms who now give holidays and pay for them.

315. Supposing that one member of the deputation this morning stated that five-sixths of the workers were opposed to early closing, would you say he was correct?—No. We have the opinion of the Trades and Labour Council, and they are distinctly opposed to late shopping. They are strongly in favour of the Saturday half-holiday, and urge us to delete even the late night. I got that from their chairman. He asked our opinion, and said, "We, as workers, do not want the late night."

316. (To *Mr. Hamilton.*) Dealing with the position with regard to partners, and the contention that only one should be considered the occupier although there are two, does it not strike you as unfair that one should be compelled to be at one shop and the other at another?—There should be only one occupier. Our idea is that there should be a head of the firm. He only should be recognised as the occupier. As the Act at present stands the manager can be called the "occupier," or the man in charge. We want to protect the assistants. The assistant may be made the manager or called a "partner" to evade the Act, and a half a dozen might go in in that way. You could not stop them, and they would compete with the small shopkeepers.

317. The owner of two shops cannot be at two places at one time. He must have some one in charge of his shops of necessity?—Yes, if he wishes to keep them open after 6 o'clock.

318. Say, I had a partner, and we had two shops, one in Willis Street and one in Cuba Street, prior to the Act coming into force: you would have no objection to us keeping these shops open?—I should consider you were competing with the small man.

319. How else could you work your business?—We say there is only one head of a firm, and he should be designated the "occupier" under the Act.

320. We could keep one shop open one night and the other shop another night?—There would be difficulties in the way in any case. It is for you, gentlemen, to overcome the difficulties.

321. *Mr. Fisher.*] The assistants would offer no objection, would they, to the inclusion of a clause in the Bill providing for fifty-two hours' work in the week, and, so long as the assistant got out of the shop at 6 o'clock, the employers could keep open till 8?—No, they would not.

WEDNESDAY, 5TH JULY, 1905.

A deputation representing Wellington butchers in attendance.

The Chairman.] I understand that you appear before the Committee this morning with the object of giving evidence in connection with the Shops and Offices Bill as it would affect the butchers of Wellington. You no doubt have had the Bill before you, and know how it would affect your trade. If there is anything else that you would like to speak about—anything contained in the Act as regards the hours of working, and so on, we shall be glad to hear that also. We have a number of deputations coming, and, while we want to hear everything you have to say, we would ask that you will not repeat too much what one of you has already stated. Will you please select your speakers.

WILLIAM JOHN GARRETT examined. (No. 22.)

1. You are a master butcher?—Yes. I am president of the Wellington Master Butchers' Union.

2. What is the membership?—Between thirty and forty. We embrace the butchering trade of Wellington, with the exception of the Gear Company, who have a gentleman here representing them.

3. Will you make your statement, please?—There are very few things in the Bill to which we wish to call your attention. The principal thing is the hours of labour—provided for, I think, in clause 3 of the Act. We are working under an award, and to fall in with that award we have arranged our hours to be from half past 6 in the morning till half past 5 at night on ordinary days, and on Saturdays from 6 in the morning till 9 at night. Those hours suit us very well. We are dealing with a perishable article, and it is necessary for us to open a bit earlier than the ordinary trader. There are sausages and other things to prepare, and hotels to serve with meat, which, in the summer-time, could not be done the day before. I think that all the members of Parliament must know that butchers have to be open a little earlier than other shops right through the colony. I think the Bill exempts fishmongers from certain provisions, and we, as butchers, dealing with a perishable article, claim that we should have a little concession also. I think the concession we are asking for principally concerns the morning.

4. You want to be able to commence as early as you like?—No. From half past 6 is our time till half past 5 at night. Perhaps it is out of place, but I should like to mention that the butchers were