

the first in Wellington to shut on Wednesday before the Act came in, and we have also considerably reduced our hours at night. At one time the closing-hour was 7; then we brought it down to 6; now we have voluntarily made it half past 5. On Saturday the closing-hour was once 11; then it was brought down to 10, and then to 9. In fact, we believe in early closing. The only thing we ask is a little concession as to commencing-time in the morning. I think that covers the whole position with regard to early closing. One of our members wishes to speak on another clause.

EDWARD DANIEL BARBER examined. (No. 23.)

5. You are a master butcher?—Yes; carrying on business in Wellington.
6. And you are a member of the association?—Yes.
7. Will you make your statement?—What I was requested by our union to ask for was in regard to clause 21, I think it is, of the present Act, giving a trade the right by a bare majority to fix the closing-hour. We would like that applied to Wellington. Wellington, being a combined district, is not, I think, affected by that provision. That is the way we interpret it; and we want that power in Wellington. All we ask is that a majority of the trade shall have the power to fix the hour of closing—that is, if Parliament decides to only fix the hours of labour and leave the hours of keeping open an open matter. We want a majority of the trade to have the right to fix the hour of shutting the shops. Otherwise we are quite satisfied with the working of the present Act as applied to our trade, with the exception of the opening-hour referred to by Mr. Garrett.

THOMAS HORBY BROWN examined. (No. 24.)

8. You represent the Gear Company specially?—Yes.
9. A very large company, is it not?—Yes.
10. How many shops has it?—Five.
11. Employing in the shops about how many hands?—From forty to fifty.
12. I think you should make a statement, in addition to the other gentlemen?—I have nothing to add to what Mr. Garrett has said. What will suit the smaller traders will suit our company.
13. You acquiesce in everything that was stated by the other witnesses?—Yes.

Statement of JOHN ROD. (No. 25.)

I can only repeat what the others have said. We have hotels to serve, and the people want the meat for dinner. If we were not to start till 8 o'clock, it would be impossible to get round with the meat for dinner. We close at half-past 5. We are only asking for about an hour extra in the morning. We always close at 9 on Saturday, and the men are perfectly satisfied. As for other shops, it might be a hardship in some businesses, such as the confectionery, to close at 6. To bring restaurants under the Act would be disastrous.

Statement of FRANK LAWRY, M.H.R. (No. 26.)

Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—The President of the Butchers' Association in Wellington asked me if I would come here and say a few words. I might state that the whole question of the butchering trade was brought very prominently before the Stock Committee, of which I was Chairman, and consequently I am fairly familiar with the requirements of that trade. In my opinion the honourable member for Avon, Mr. Tanner, who is a member of this Committee, struck the keynote of the whole situation when he pointed out to me that the master butchers in Christchurch voiced the opinion of the butchers throughout the length and breadth of New Zealand, when they said that the important time for carrying on their business was in the morning. I believe that the butchers throughout the country would be prepared to curtail the time in the evening if the concession were granted to them, to have time early in the morning. Just before I came down here, I was talking to a gentleman who keeps a very large boardinghouse in Auckland, and he said that very frequently when a ship came into Auckland at 6 in the morning his house was literally flooded with people off the ship; he could not make provision overnight for an influx of visitors that he did not anticipate, and the only course open to him was to ring up a butcher's shop and ask them to bring down what he required to provide his visitors with food. I think Mr. Garrett and the other gentlemen have placed the situation fairly before you that the butchering trade is an exceptional one; that the goods are perishable, especially in the summer-time; and the early morning is the most important time for the butchers to carry on the work associated with their business.

14. *Mr. Sidey* (to Mr. Barber).] You stated that you wanted clause 21 to apply in Wellington?—Yes.

15. Do I understand that you prefer that no limitation whatever be placed on the hour?—We prefer the limit. If we do not get the limit, then give us the power to shut by a majority of the trade.

16. You want Parliament to fix a limit for closing?—Yes.

17. But if no limit is fixed?—Then we want the power to fix the hour by a majority. We want the hour for commencing in the morning to be 6.30. At present we are working under an award and if the award were not in force I presume we should have to obey the Shop Hours Act.

18. The butchers are exempt from Saturday closing?—Yes, we have that privilege.

19. What is the feeling of the butchers as regards a universal Saturday half-holiday?—I think a majority of the butchers of Wellington would be favourable to a universal Saturday half-holiday, if it were absolutely universal, without any exemptions.

20. Can you speak in the name of your association?—We have discussed it before and I am sure the majority of our union decided that it would be possible. They would be quite willing to accept it if it were absolutely universal—with no exemptions whatever.