

73. You come here this morning as individuals?—Yes, combined together on account of the exigencies of the situation.

74. Do you represent any in the trade besides those present?—Some of the members of our deputation represent those in other centres. Mr. Godber is here to speak for Christchurch and Dunedin, I understand.

75. Will you make a statement?—Yes, sir. It was a great surprise to us to find that we were not exempt, as we had been previously, from the operation of the Act. We were not aware until the first Saturday night that the Act came into operation, that we were not exempt as hitherto under the Half-holiday Act. I do not think the Labour Department can say that in the working of that Act they have had any trouble with the confectioners—that, although we have been exempt, we have abused the exemption. So we come to ask you to still exempt us from the operation of the Shops and Offices Act. It is obvious to every one that our business is done after the hours at which the Act says shops shall be closed—namely, 6 o'clock—in fact, we hardly begin to take money until that time. It is in the evening, when the entertainments and all that kind of thing is going on, that we begin to take money. Under the present law it is impossible to work our assistants very long hours. We cannot work them more than fifty-two hours. I may say that we work in double shifts. Every one who employs assistants at night is bound to do that. But the assistants do not work every night in the week. Some work three nights, some two. I am speaking personally, but I think those with me will bear out what I say. Instead of our assistants working fifty-two hours they do not work more than forty-six a week. That is the compensation to which we think they are entitled in view of the fact that they work two and sometimes three nights a week. We feel that if this Act were adhered to, and we were compelled to close at the hours stated, it would really mean that we should have to shut altogether. At an interview which a deputation from us had with the Premier, two of our assistants, who went with us, voluntarily informed the Premier that they were quite satisfied with their hours, that they did not work more than forty-five or forty-six, and that if this Act were adhered to, instead of having two relays of assistants, we should only be able to have one. I think I have stated the case fully so far as I am concerned. Should we not be exempted from this Act, there would be no other course for us but to close altogether. I speak now more on behalf of the sugar-confectioners—that is, the ones who make sugar-confections, and not the pastrycooks.

Statement of JAMES GODBER. (No. 28.)

*The Chairman* : Whom do you represent ?

*Witness* : I represent the pastrycooks, confectioners, and restaurateurs of Wellington, and I have also had a telegram from Mr. Hopkins, of Dunedin, and one from Mr. Broadway, of Christchurch, asking me to represent the confectioners of Christchurch and Dunedin before this Committee. As far as our particular trade is concerned, I personally feel it almost a waste of time to take up the time of the Committee, because they must see for themselves that our trade should, in justice, not only to ourselves but to the public, come under the exemption clause. In the trade I represent it is necessary that our places of business should be open after the time mentioned in the last Act for closing—6 o'clock—because a great many of the assistants in the various establishments are bachelors, and have not homes to go to when they leave work, and some of them are dependent upon shops like ours for their evening meal, and also for refreshments generally. We feel that in the interests of the public it is not right—it is not fair to them—that places like ours should be closed and other places—which, truly, pay licenses—should remain open, because we know that it is the case, especially in New Zealand—and I do not think it will ever be altered—that no gentleman cares to take a lady into a hotel to get refreshments such as tea or coffee; and it is quite necessary that people who want tea or coffee should have places available to get it. We expect to—and in fact we do and are quite willing to—observe the statutory hours for assistants; and we confidently expect that Parliament will, when this Bill is passed, exempt our trade from the restrictions imposed on other trades, because we feel that in that way we are supplying a public necessity. I question very much whether, if it were not for the public convenience, the representatives of our trade would not rather close earlier; but we realise that we are open for the benefit of the public, and we feel that we are doing something for the good of the community in keeping our shops open. For instance, there is this: supposing the other shops are kept open till 7 or 8 at night, well, then, all the assistants are thrown out on the streets then, and there is nowhere for them to go for refreshments but the hotels if our shops are closed. But a great many of these assistants—and it is becoming more and more pronounced—desire refreshments that are non-intoxicating, and prefer having them to going to the hotels. On behalf of the confectioners and pastrycooks of Wellington, as well as Christchurch and Dunedin, I confidently appeal to the Committee, and through the Committee to Parliament, to exempt our shops from the hours of closing.

Statement of FRANK HENRY ELLISON. (No. 29.)

*The Chairman* : Where is your place of business, Mr. Ellison ?

*Witness* : No. 75, Cuba Street. I might say that I have had twenty-eight years' experience in the confectionery business, a little more than twenty-six years of that as an assistant, and for the last two years on my own account. While an assistant I fought in the interests of my employer, knowing the harm that this legislation would do in connection with our business. I also know now that it would have a very baneful effect. When this Act first came into operation—last November I mean—I kept an account of my takings from 6 o'clock, for twenty-one days, and I found that 75 per cent. of the money was taken after 6. Our business is a catch business; the goods we handle are luxuries, not necessities; and the trade is done when there are people about. The business is such that on a wet Saturday night our takings are, possibly, reduced by one-half, and it is the same on a wet holiday. It is only when a large number of people are on the streets and have an opportunity to see our wares that they buy. What we lose on a wet Saturday we never make up on a Monday. We also keep light refreshments,