

DONG HONG YAM GETE examined. (No. 32.)

205. *The Chairman.*] Do you wish to make a statement?—Yes, sir; if you will allow me.

206. Will you tell us how the Act affects your shop?—I have a shop opposite the Post-office in Newtown. Several Chinamen came up and told me how the Inspector had come and shut them up. Other Chinamen complained, and said they were suffering a great deal of loss. But I hardly understood what they said. When I was by myself one Friday night, however, the Inspector came and told me that I must shut at 6. So I shut at 6. On the Friday night before that I took £4 10s., but on the night when he came and told me to shut up I took only £1 14s. If the fruit is left from 6 at night till 8 in the morning it will, in the summer-time, be brought near to getting rotten. Fruit generally sells at from 6 to 10 at night. A lady came to my shop and asked, "What made you shut up last night?" "Well," I said, "the Inspector came to my shop and made me shut up, and I cannot help it." "But," she said, "I want to get fruit." I said, "You will have to come at a different hour, then." "Oh!" she said, "The doctor says my girl must have fruit; she is sick." I told her I could not help it. The next morning a lady came and said, "I came here, but you were shut." I said, "Yes; the Inspector made me shut. I could not help it. You will have to come at a different time now." "Look here," she said, "my husband is working on the wharf; he left before you were open, and when he came home all the shops were shut. All my family were starving that night." Then, a gentleman came one morning before 8 o'clock and knocked at the door. I was inside sweeping. The knocking continued, and he said, "Open the door; I want some cigarettes." I said, "You cannot get them till 8." He said, "I must be at work at 8. What am I to do?" I said "You will have to see the Inspector and get permission for me to open for you." In Newtown eight shops out of ten are selling tobacco and green-groceries in addition to fruit. So if they shut up at 6 o'clock it will be very difficult for men up there to get some onion or something else for breakfast. So a lot of Chinese said, "This is no good. We will get you, as you have interpreted for the Court so long, just to go and tell the gentlemen."

207. You mean that there are ten Chinese shops at Newtown, and eight of them sell groceries and tobacco and fruit?—Fruit, tobacco, greengroceries, and some other groceries. Every shopkeeper told me this: "If they will not let us remain open till 10, try to get them to make it 9 o'clock on a week night, but 10 on Saturday." That is what they told me to ask you, gentlemen. Seven o'clock in the morning is quite early enough; men come in to get something for breakfast. At Newtown most of the men come down to town to work. When they start the shops are not open, and when they go home all the shops are shut.

208. *Mr. Sidey* (to *Mr. Baylis*).] Referring to the shops against which proceedings were taken, were they shops which carried on a combined business?—Yes. I think two of the shops sell Chinese goods besides the fruit.

209. Two of the shops proceeded against sold something else besides fruit?—Yes, I think so.

210. If the shops selling a similar class of goods are closed at 6, do you not think it unfair that after these shops have shut some other shop selling the same goods should be allowed to keep open?—I would not like to go into a general discussion of that, for this reason: in the colony there are, I think, very few shops that confine themselves to one special trade. I know of a grocer's shop in Newtown, three doors from a Chinaman's fruit-shop, which sells vegetables, tapes and cotton, and ironmongery, and small articles of that description. Newtown is entirely cut off from the centre of Wellington, and is almost a centre of its own. Since early closing has come into force all the shops have had to shut up at 6, except two or three one-man shops, and the result has been stagnation of trade. The takings of businesses which were £3 or £4 a day have dwindled down to that number of shillings.

211. At any rate, you recognise that it would not be fair to, say, a grocer if another man who sold groceries and also fruit was allowed to remain open while he was shut?—Yes.

212. Did the two brothers named Burgess, who closed at 6, sell anything other than fruit?—No; they were purely fruiterers and greengrocers.

213. Is there any one particular hour at which the fruiterers would agree to close?—That I would not like to say.

214. (To *Mr. Dong Hong*.) Do you think all the fruiterers would agree to close at one time?—You mean close at the same hour?

215. Yes?—Yes; they are willing to, as long as you allow them to keep the assistants.

216. At what time?—At 9 o'clock on week-nights, 1 on Wednesday, and 10 on Saturday night.

217. They all agree to that?—Yes; that is what they all told me. And open at 7 in the morning.

218. Would you agree to the shopkeepers fixing their own hours, under a clause here? If a majority of shopkeepers say the shops shall be closed at a certain hour, then all have got to close at that hour: do you agree to that?—Yes; all close at the same hour. In a shop where there is an assistant employed, say, the assistant is not to work more than fifty-two hours a week. There would not be much doing in the morning, and the shopkeeper could let him off till noon, so long as he worked later. They are agreeable that way too.

219. *Mr. Barber*.] You said you thought 10 o'clock late enough on Saturday night: do you think 10 o'clock is late enough for Newtown?—Ten o'clock is late enough for me.

220. But do not the people, when they come back from town, want to do their shopping after 10?—Well, if I ask for a later hour you might not give me any at all. The people will have to get used to 10 o'clock and make haste home.

221. *Mr. Alison* (to *Mr. Baylis*).] You said that if the law was enforced as to 6-o'clock closing the fruit-shops would have to close up. Are you confident that that would be the effect?—I take it that would be the effect. I may say that ever since the inception of the Bill I have tried as far as possible to resist it and protect the people who have been punished, doing it in as passive a manner as possible. I did not want to work in opposition to the Department, because I knew they were placed in a very awkward position; but we had our living to look after. And I know for a positive fact that