

51. Would two out of three applications be over twenty?—Yes.

52. And were they prepared to start at any wages you were prepared to give them?—Yes.

53. How many applications for work do you get in the course of a month or year?—Quite a dozen people every month.

54. Over a hundred people are prepared to start every year: are they all women?—Yes.

55. And you say that two out of three would be over twenty years of age?—Yes; but the people in my office do not refer the matter to me. They ask if the girls are over twenty, and if they say "Yes," they are told they are too old.

56. What wage would they be prepared to start at?—They would be quite satisfied with 10s. a week.

57. Two out of three of these women would be prepared to start at 10s. a week?—Yes.

58. Do you not think that legislation should be passed to provide that they should get at least enough wages to find them in food and clothing?—If they are capable of earning it, certainly; but every girl cannot earn it. It is impossible for some of these girls to handle a tool, and you should see how slow they are.

59. Do you keep them at work on one class of goods—packing caramels, for instance?—We put them to the elementary stages of the work at first and then advance them, giving them a rise in wages.

60. (To Mr. Cable). You say that in many cases young men come to you for work when over twenty years of age?—Yes.

61. How many?—In the course of twenty-five years' experience I should say dozens.

62. If they are over twenty years of age, what, on an average, would be their wage?—It would depend upon their physique and activity. Anything from 10s. to 15s. a week.

63. You do not think this minimum wage would be enough to give a living to these young workers?—They could do on it, but I take it that they give up some other occupation to come and learn a new trade.

64. (To Mr. Haughton). How many employees do you take on who are over twenty years of age?—Very few.

65. Then this Bill would not affect you much?—No.

66. Have you got any young people working for you over twenty whom you have recently taken on?—No, I do not think so.

67. Have you any working for you at all who do not get the wage prescribed by the present Factories Act?—No.

68. Do you think that in the interests of decency a living-wage should be fixed for these workers—have you any objection to it?—I have no objection to it; but employers do not run their factories for the purpose of giving these people employment. They do not run them for the fun of running them. The cost of the labour involved in producing an article is calculated, and if the article cannot be produced at a certain price the industry has to be given up.

69. But this Bill, you say, would not affect you at all?—I do not think it would affect us to any great extent.

70. (To Mr. Cathie). You said that boys came in to get work from the country when they had got tired of dairying?—Yes; I have known that.

71. What is the proportion of your workers who are taken on when they are over twenty years of age?—Very few; I steer clear of them. I see the difficulty from their point of view. I ask them when they come to me whether their parents are living in town, and if they say "No," I ask them what they are to do. I will not have the odium cast upon me of employing them at low wages. But there is this side of the question: if a boy takes a notion to go on the land and gets a small wage, and finds afterwards that he cannot get more, is he to be compelled to work there all his life?

72. How many lads have you handled under those special conditions—where the boys have worked on the land?—Probably a dozen.

73. It is not a large volume of that kind of labour?—Certainly not.

74. You do think that a living-wage should be fixed by the Legislature in the interests of morality, and for the comfort of these people?—Yes, it is possible to do so; but if you prevent people from going to a business where they are taught something, but have to begin at a wage which the employer can afford to give them, then you prevent them from getting work at all.

75. Have you any people in your employ over twenty years of age who are getting less than 17s. a week?—I do not think so. We have not taken them on as apprentices. We are working under an award.

76. *Mr. Alison* (to Mrs. Penlington).—Are there many people twenty years of age and over applying for work and who have not had any previous experience?—Personally, I do not take them. I suggest other courses to them when they are over twenty years of age and apply to me.

77. Then, this Bill would not affect you at all?—Personally, it would not. I prefer to have them when they first leave school, and to train them.

78. (To Mr. Cable). You said a provision in the law fixing wages at 17s. for young people of twenty years and over would be prejudicial to the workers?—Yes. A lot of them would be prevented from coming to the trade at all.

79. And you consider that would be seriously detrimental to many a young man's career through life?—I should say it would, judging from the mechanical talent developed by some of them. You might throttle another James Watt or an Armstrong. The fact of the matter is that these young fellows, if prevented from learning their trade here, would go elsewhere.

80. Would the passing of this Amendment Bill be seriously prejudicial to the employers?—It would upset their arrangements with their apprentices under agreement.

81. If the Bill became law, I understand from your evidence you would not be prepared to take them on if twenty years and over to enable them to learn their trade?—Certainly not.