

126. As there may be an objection to keeping tea-rooms open at night, it is hardly right to have these signatures on the petition?—Mr. Colegrove is the employer of the two signatories you have there.

127. Who is he? Is he here?—He is the “boss,” not an assistant.

128. There are special trades which require exemption?—If any exemptions were made for the pawnbroking business, and all the other shops were closed, we should not be allowed to sell goods.

129. Supposing the law permitted you to keep open and compelled other people to close, it would be unjust?—Yes, certainly.

130. Is it not a fact that under your license you can keep open until 9 o'clock, and the law cannot prevent you?—Yes, for pawnbroking only.

131. It can only prevent you from selling goods?—Yes.

132. And really if it can be shown that it is good for the masses to have early closing, you would not act the dog in the manger and try to prevent it?—No.

133. Would it not be a good thing for everybody, in these days of intelligence and labour-saving appliances, to work fewer hours?—Yes, fifty-two hours is quite long enough for any one to work.

134. If we could devise a scheme to put before Parliament by which the hours of labour could be shortened, and you might be hurt by it, you would not act the dog in the manger?—Certainly not; but we want to keep our billets, and we hope our employers will do well, and be able to keep us on.

135. You do not want to go back to last century hours?—No.

136. When you first started business, at what hour did you begin?—I went at 8 o'clock in the morning.

137. *Mr. Fisher* (to *Mr. Armit*.) What is your business worth to you in the evening?—Anything up from £1. From 6 to 10 we take from £3 to £4. Our business being open creates the demand. A man who in the evening wants a cigar and cannot get it will not smoke two the next morning.

138. If you shut your shop at 6 o'clock you do not find your takings increase in the morning? You cannot make that loss up?—No.

139. (To *Mr. Solomons*.) The class of people whom you do business with have no chance of doing their business with you in the day-time?—No, not the working-class, and it is really the working-class we cater for. They are away at work up till 5 o'clock. A working-man does not come in his working-clothes as a rule to do his business.

140. Do you think it would be better if the working-people were prevented from going to you at all?—You might just as well shut up altogether.

141. (To *Mr. Juriss*.) I suppose the same applies to you; the young men could not come to you during the day?—No.

142. So far as the three of you are concerned, you think there is a possibility that one assistant in your business will lose his billet?—*Mr. Armit*: One of our assistants has to go.

*Mr. Juriss*: I might get less wages.

143. *Mr. Ell* (to *Mr. Solomons*.) Who wrote the petition out?—I could not answer that. It was given to me to go round.

144. Who gave it to you?—*Mr. Jones*, of Jones and Ashdown.

145. He is an employer?—Yes.

146. Who took it round?—*Mr. Juriss*: I took it round.

*Mr. Solomons*: I took it round to some people.

147. (To *Mr. Solomons*.) What is your position in the shop?—I am head salesman.

148. Is there any one under you?—One.

149. Are you aware that there are sixty names of tea-rooms and restaurant-keepers' employees on the petition?—For instance, there are all *Mr. Carroll's* employees, the employees of *Mr. Godber* and of *Mr. Mawson*?—I did not read the names myself, except those whose signatures I collected myself.

150. I notice that *Mr.* and *Mrs. Carroll's* employees' names are at the head, and the same with *Mr. Godber's*. Do these employees represent tobacconists and fishmongers?—I did not go down the list.

151. (To *Mr. Armit*.) What is your position in the shop?—I am manager for *Mr. Batkin*.

152. (To *Mr. Juriss*.) What is your position?—I am town traveller for Messrs. Inglis Bros.

153. Are you the head traveller?—Yes, and have been there for eight years.

154. Are you manager of the shop?—I am head salesman.

A deputation from the Wellington Trades and Labour Council, also representing the Executive Council of the Trades and Labour Councils of the colony, attended the Commission.

*The Chairman*: I understand you have come this morning for the purpose of giving evidence in connection with the Shops and Offices Act Amendment Bill which is now before Parliament. We shall be glad to hear anything you have to say, but I presume you will not overlap one another in your statements.

WILLIAM HENRY HAMPTON examined. (No. 111.)

155. What does the deputation represent?—The Trades and Labour Council of Wellington, and also, by authority, the Executive Council of the colony.

156. Do you say you represent the Trades and Labour Councils of the whole colony?—I do. I am President of the Wellington Trades and Labour Council.

157. Can you give me any idea of the membership of your federation?—No. It will be well on to twenty thousand, at all events—that is, throughout the colony.

158. Just make your statement, please?—The position we have to put before you arises out of the decision arrived at by the annual conference held in Wellington last April. The position of the Labour party in regard to the Shops and Offices Act is this: That all shops shall be closed at 6 p.m. on five days of the week and at 1 o'clock on Saturday, subject, of course, to the necessary exemptions.