

in this direction, and we very much regret that the early-closing provision in the Act does not apply to the whole colony. We believe it would meet with more approval were it made applicable to the whole of the colony. Since the Act was passed several meetings have been held in respect to the early-closing clause, and at a mass meeting which was held in the Druids' Hall on the 23rd November last, which meeting was convened by the Trades and Labour Council, this resolution was carried :—

165. Was it a public meeting?—A public meeting, and I may say that the hall was packed. This was the resolution, “That this mass meeting of citizens indorses the action of Parliament in having provided in the Shops and Offices Act for uniform closing at 6 p.m. in the combined districts of Wellington, Auckland, Christchurch, and Dunedin, and regrets that section 3 does not apply to the whole colony. Further, the meeting supports the officers of the Labour Department in their efforts to administer the Act in its entirety.” I have heard it said that in asking for a provision of this kind we are ahead of our time. I would point out to the Committee that we are very much behind the times; the Australian States, or rather, three of them, have legislated in this direction—New South Wales as long ago as 1899. I have the New South Wales Act, which was passed by the Parliament there in 1899, and assented to on the 22nd December of the same year; and I propose to put the early-closing clauses on record: “Part I. The Closing of Shops.—(1.) The closing-times for all shops (except those mentioned in Schedule I) situate within the Metropolitan or the Newcastle Shopping District shall, in every week, be as follows: On Monday and Tuesday, 6 o'clock; on Wednesday, 1 o'clock or 6 o'clock, whichever of these times is chosen by the shopkeeper in pursuance of this Act; on Thursday, 6 o'clock; on Friday—(a) 6 o'clock where the closing-time on the preceding Wednesday was 1 o'clock; (b) 10 o'clock where the closing-time on the preceding Wednesday was 6 o'clock; on Saturday—(a) 1 o'clock where the closing-time on the preceding Wednesday was 6 o'clock; (b) 10 o'clock where the closing-time on the preceding Wednesday was 1 o'clock: and all such shops shall close on those days not later than the hours above mentioned, which shall be hours after the hour of noon on each day: Provided that this subsection shall not apply in so far as it fixes the closing-time before 10 o'clock to the day immediately preceding Christmas or New Year's Day, or where Christmas or New Year's Day is a Monday to the next preceding Saturday.”

166. *Mr. Fisher.*] Will you read the exemptions?—I will come to them directly. “Shops mentioned in Schedule I.—5. (1.) The closing-times for shops mentioned in Part I. of Schedule I., and situated in any shopping district, shall be 10 o'clock on Friday or Saturday, whichever of those days is chosen by the shopkeeper, and half past 7 o'clock on the other week days. And all such shops shall close on those days not later than the hours above mentioned.” In 1900 the New South Wales Parliament passed an amendment to the original Act of 1899, and this was assented to on the 11th December, 1900. It provides “Closing-times.—Sections 3 and 4 of the principal Act are hereby repealed, and every Proclamation made under the provisions of section 3 of the said Act is hereby rescinded, and the following shall stand in lieu thereof: (1.) The closing-times for all shops (except those mentioned in Schedule I of the principal Act) situate within a country shopping district shall be—on one week-day, 1 o'clock; on one week-day, 10 o'clock; such days (until altered in pursuance of this Act) to be those respectively now observed in each shopping district, and, on the four other week days, 6 o'clock; and all such shops shall close on those days not later than the hours above mentioned, which shall be hours after the hour of noon each day.” Then section 4 of that amendment is to this effect: “The Governor may by Proclamation constitute any area not now declared a country shopping district to be a country shopping district, and shall in such Proclamation define the boundaries thereof. The closing-time for all shops (except those mentioned in Schedule I. of the principal Act) situate within such country shopping district shall be: on one week-day, 1 o'clock; on one week-day, 10 o'clock; such days (until altered in the same manner as provided in the preceding section for existing country shopping districts) to be those respectively declared in such Proclamation, and, on the four other week-days 6 o'clock; and all such shops shall close on those days not later than the hours above mentioned, which shall be hours after the hour of noon each day.” Clause 5 reads “Notwithstanding anything contained in Part I. of the principal Act, the closing-time for news-agents' and booksellers' shops within the metropolitan area shall be 8 o'clock on five week-nights and 10 o'clock on Saturday. A news-agent's shop shall include a shop where newspapers, periodicals, magazines, novelettes, stationery, school requisites, or books are exposed for sale.” Then, clause 6 provides that “In the case of any shop situate within the Newcastle Shopping District, and mentioned in section 1 of the principal Act, any shopkeeper who has elected to close at 1 o'clock on Wednesday may keep his shop open till 10 o'clock on Friday: provided that in such case his closing-time on Saturday shall be 6 o'clock.” I will now deal with the exemptions.

167. These are the exemptions under the principal Act?—Yes. The exemptions under the New South Wales Act are these: Schedule I.—Part I.—Hairdressers' shops: 10 p.m. Friday or Saturday; 7.30 p.m. on other week-days. They can choose between Friday and Saturday for the late night.

168. *The Chairman.*] They keep open an hour and a half later than the other shops?—Yes. Part II.—Chemists' shops, druggists' shops, private dispensaries, public dispensaries, flower-shops, 11 p.m. Saturdays; 9 p.m. on other days. Part III.—Fruit-shops, vegetable-shops, tobaccoists' shops, confectioners' shops, newspaper and news-agents' shops, publichouses, hotels, and wine-shops, undertakers' shops: 11 p.m. on all week-days. Part IV.—Restaurants, refreshment-shops, eating-houses, fish-shops, oyster-shops, cooked provision shops: 12 midnight on all week-days. That is the New South Wales law in respect to early closing, and now I come to the South Australian law. The South Australian Act was passed in 1900, and assented to on the 5th December of that year. It provides as follows: “5. This Act shall not apply to the classes of shops mentioned in the First Schedule. Part I.—The Metropolitan Shopping District.—6. The Electoral Districts of North Adelaide, East Adelaide, West Adelaide, East Torrens, West Torrens, Sturt, and Port Adelaide are hereby constituted the Metropolitan Shopping District. 7. (1.) The closing-times for all shops within the Metropolitan Shop