

186. Should the shop-assistants, in your Council's opinion, be permitted to work more than forty-eight hours if overtime is paid?—If it were absolutely necessary in certain cases that overtime should be worked, then a special payment should be fixed for it, such as there is in all other trades. There may be occasions for it, but we should not like to see done what is being done in Wellington at the present time—that when an employee works overtime his weekly wages are reduced for that week, so that his overtime-payment only makes up the same total as he usually draws. I have been informed by some of the assistants that that has been done here.

187. Then what you say is that your Council would not object to overtime being worked in exceptional cases only?—In exceptional cases only.

188. What do you suggest as to the rate of pay for overtime?—Well, there has been no suggestion thrown out in regard to that. In most of the trades it is time and a quarter for the first two hours and time and a half afterwards; and double time after 10 at night. It wants a good overtime clause to meet the case. That is really the opinion of all the trades—to abolish overtime as far as possible and, by providing for a heavy overtime rate, to insure that overtime shall only be worked where it is absolutely necessary.

189. You gave a list of exemptions, and amongst them you included chemists selling certain articles. What were these articles?—"Chemists to be allowed to sell medicines, dressings, and medical and surgical appliances, provided the purchaser produces a doctor's order."

190. Do you consider it is in the interests of the workers themselves that they should be compelled to pay a doctor to certify that they should have medicine when it is required after 6 o'clock?—When it is required outside of ordinary hours, the case is generally so urgent that it is necessary to call in a doctor.

191. You consider then that medicine is only urgently required after 6 o'clock in the evening when there is some serious danger to the person needing the medicine?—Yes. When there is some special occasion—if it is so urgent the case is urgent enough for a doctor.

192. You advocate that chemists should only be allowed to keep open under the conditions which you state?—That is so. The position in regard to chemists is this: they are entering into practically every trade now. What with perfumery and toilet requisites of every sort and other things, they are encroaching on almost every trade, and you must put a limit somewhere.

193. Assuming that chemists sold medicines and the articles you enumerated only, would you then have any objection to their keeping open?—I do not know what decision might be come to on the matter in that case; we were dealing with the chemists as they now are.

194. Do you not consider it is in the interests of the people as a whole, including the workers, that they should have an opportunity to get medicine at all reasonable hours?—Well, it depends on what you term "reasonable hours." We say that from 8 in the morning till 6 in the evening are reasonable hours. Any case more urgent is urgent enough for a doctor.

195. Prior to the passing of the Act last session did your Council make representations to the Minister of Labour in favour of early closing?—For the past four or five years now they have consistently advocated 6-o'clock closing on five days of the week, and at 1 o'clock on Saturdays.

196. What representations did you make? Did you interview him?—We interviewed him as a body, and the whole of the conference's proposals have been placed before the Premier. I believe that a copy has also been sent to every member of Parliament each year, which copy contains this provision.

197. What was the Premier's reply to your representations?—The usual one—that the matter would be kept steadily in view, and so on.

198. Did you ask that all shops should be closed at 6, as provided in clause 3 of the existing Act?—I believe there was no mention of exemption in the Council's proposals previously.

199. That is, that in the representations you made to the Government, you asked that all shops should be closed as set out in clause 3 of the existing Act?—Yes.

200. Did you interview any representatives of the Legislative Council?—It has been the custom of the Council to give evidence before the Labour Bills Committee of both Houses. They appeared before the Labour Bills Committee of the Legislative Council.

201. Did you advocate there the same provisions *re* early closing as you did to the Premier?—I was not a member of any of those deputations, but no doubt if they gave evidence on the Shops and Offices Act at all, they would speak in that direction.

202. Do you know whether they did give evidence before the Labour Bills Committee of the Legislative Council?—Not last year.

203. Did your Council interview, or make representations to, Mr. Tregear, the head of the Labour Department, with reference to the hours of the early closing of shops being fixed by Parliament?—I cannot say that we have done so. It has been the custom to lay the proposals before the Minister of Labour.

204. You do not think that you interviewed Mr. Tregear?—Not unless Mr. Tregear would be present at the interview which we had with the Premier, and it is generally the custom for him to be there.

205. Was Mr. Tregear present?—He is generally present when we interview the Premier as Minister of Labour.

206. You say you represent the workers generally. Is that so?—I think we can claim to represent a large proportion of the workers outside the unions and outside the Trades and Labour Councils of the colony.

207. How many workers are there in this colony—that is, in town and country?—I have not seen the figures lately, and I would not like to hazard a guess at them. It would be a hard job to compile them.

208. You say that your Council represents twenty thousand workers?—Yes; we claim that we represent that number—that is, apart from the wives and families of our union members.