

have to go out and earn their living, and it would be impossible in our business to pay them 17s. a week simply because they are over twenty. With regard to the progressive rates of wages under the Act, these never trouble us, because when a girl comes to us when very young before she is much over fourteen or fifteen she is working well. If you passed any Act you could on earth it would not compel us to give a girl more than her value to us. Sometimes a girl leaves the printing or bookbinding business and comes to us, but she is of no more use to us than a younger girl, although she may be twenty years of age. If this amendment is carried we shall not be able to put her on. In the confectionery trade it would be impossible to take on a girl over twenty and pay her more than we do a girl of fifteen.

CHARLES CATHIE, Clothing-manufacturer, Wellington, examined. (No. 5.)

12. *The Chairman.*] Will you make your statement, please?—Mr. Jones has so fully stated what I ought to say in this matter that he seems to have thought it out on exactly the same lines. As clothing-manufacturers we are working under an award of the Arbitration Court, which covers all this ground and fixes the wages to be paid, but I should say that if a girl is not worth 17s. a week when she is over twenty she is not worth keeping. The point is that girls over fourteen or fifteen come seeking to be taken on, and in some cases, as Mr. Jones suggested, there is some hardship behind them which forces them to seek work, and if they are new to it they are not much use to us any more than a young girl of fourteen or fifteen, and, of course, we could not pay them any more even if they were over twenty. It is only in extreme cases where we do take such girls on, because the younger girls will adapt themselves to our work much quicker and be worth more probably than girls when they get to the age of twenty-five. The same thing applies in the employment of lads in the pressing-room. Lads have come down from the country, after getting tired of milking cows perhaps, and, although they may be big fellows, it is utterly impossible to give them 17s. a week straight away. In the case of apprentices the wages are dealt with by the Arbitration Court. It would be impossible to start these lads at 17s. a week, and yet by employing them it would give them an opportunity of bettering their position later in life. I do not see that it matters very much to the employers directly, because all we have to do is to discharge such hands if they are over twenty and keep clear of this Act; but some of us may have children who will want work by-and-by, and, looking at the matter from a general point of view, we are stopping people from getting work who want it. I assume that Mr. Taylor had some strong cases of people being underpaid in his mind that have forced him to bring down such an amendment as this; but surely some other way might be found of dealing with unjust people without taking a step of so sweeping a nature.

RICHARD HAUGHTON (of Messrs. Turnbull and Co., Manufacturing Grocers), Wellington, examined. (No. 6.)

13. *The Chairman.*] Just make your statement, please?—I believe the effect of this Bill, if passed would press very heavily on girls over twenty years of age, for this reason: that young girls coming into the factory from their fourteenth year become accustomed to the different classes of work easily, because their fingers are nimble, and they can learn the business as they go along. If we took on girls of twenty years of age and had to pay them 17s. or £1 a week, it would disorganize the work of the factory, because we should have to increase the wages of all the other girls. There is a great deal of jealousy amongst girls in these matters, and it would not work. I think the present arrangements under the Act, by which the girls have to be paid 3s. a week more for every year they are employed, works very well. I do not think I can add any more to what has already been said on the subject.

AUGUSTUS CHIPPER examined. (No. 7.)

14. *The Chairman.*] You represent?—The Wellington Woollen-manufacturing Company. Most of the other speakers have gone over the ground that I came to speak on; but there are one or two phases of the question that I think some of the previous speakers have not touched upon, and one is in reference to old people. For instance, we have one old lady who works in our factory. When she was a young woman she served her time at the trade, but now her sight is not so good as to enable her to go on working on garments with the younger girls, and so we keep her going at odd jobs about the factory—chiefly at putting on buttons, which does not require very good eyesight. If this Bill became law we should have to dispense with her services. I know another person in the same position in another clothing-factory. At different times we have had young widows applying for work, and they have quickly been taught their trade if apt, and become journeymen able to earn the ordinary wages. If this law were passed they would be precluded from this work. My experience is the same as that of Mr. Jones, for we often get people applying for work who have never been in a factory before. We have started them at 10s. a week, which is always more than they are worth, for some weeks; but they quickly become qualified for more wages, and after a few months they get often as much as £1 and £1 5s. a week. We could not employ these people at all if this amendment of the Act were passed.

A deputation from the Wellington Trades and Labour Council attended the Committee.

*The Chairman:* You heard the statement I made to the members of the other deputation, to the effect that the evidence only applies to the amendment of the Act now before the House, and I shall be glad if you will confine yourself to that.

ALBERT HUNTER COOPER examined. (No. 8.)

15. What are you?—I am secretary of the Wellington Trades and Labour Council. I might say that we are here by instruction of the Council to support the Bill that has been introduced by Mr. Taylor. We understand that the object of the Bill is really to remedy a defect in the present