

1905.
NEW ZEALAND.

LABOUR BILLS COMMITTEE :
F A C T O R I E S A C T 1 9 0 1 A M E N D M E N T B I L L
(REPORT ON), TOGETHER WITH COPY OF BILL AND MINUTES OF EVIDENCE THEREON.

Brought up 11th August, 1905, and ordered to be printed.

R E P O R T.

THE Labour Bills Committee, having given careful consideration to the provisions of the Factories Act 1901 Amendment Bill referred to them by your honourable House, have now the honour to report that they recommend that the said Bill be allowed to proceed, subject, however, to the amendments shown on a copy of the Bill attached hereto.

Parliamentary Buildings, 11th August, 1905.

J. F. ARNOLD,
Chairman.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

DEPARTMENT OF THE HISTORY OF ARTS

AND ARCHITECTURE

[AS REPORTED FROM THE LABOUR BILLS COMMITTEE.]

House of Representatives, 11th August, 1905.

Mr. Taylor.

FACTORIES ACT 1901 AMENDMENT.

ANALYSIS.

Title.
1. Short Title.

2. Section 31 of "Factories Act, 1901," amended.

A BILL INTITULED

AN ACT to amend "The Factories Act, 1901."

Title.

BE IT ENACTED by the General Assembly of New Zealand in Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

1. The Short Title of this Act is "The Factories Act 1901 Amendment Act, 1905." Short Title.

2. Section thirty-one of "The Factories Act, 1901," is hereby amended by the addition of the following paragraph:—

Section 31 of
"Factories Act,
1901," amended.

10 " (8.) Every person of the age of twenty years or over who is
~~employed in any capacity in a factory~~ *has been employed in*
any capacity in a factory or factories for a period of not
less than four years shall be entitled to receive from the
15 occupier payment for the work at such rate as is agreed
on, being in no case less than seventeen shillings per
week."

By Authority: JOHN MACKAY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1905.

No. 27—2.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHILIP L. KATZ, JR.

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MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

FRIDAY, 28TH JULY, 1905.

A deputation of the New Zealand Employers' Federation attended the Committee.

The Chairman: I understand you have come this morning, ladies and gentlemen, to give evidence in connection with the Factories Act Amendment Bill before the House. You understand from the communications you have received that, inasmuch as this is a private member's Bill, and for other reasons, the Committee are not opening up the whole question of the Factories Act, so that your evidence is restricted to the subject contained in the Bill that is now before the Committee.

HENRY FIELD examined. (No. 1.)

1. What are you?—Secretary of the New Zealand Employers' Federation.

2. Will you make your statement?—We quite understand that we are here this morning to give evidence on the amendment of the Factories Act proposed by Mr. Taylor. I might say that the New Zealand Federation of Employers is authorised in connection with all these labour Bills to speak on behalf of the organized employers of the colony, and that, in addition to our general warrant to represent the employers of the colony on parliamentary matters, we have been expressly desired by the larger associations in Wellington, Dunedin, and Christchurch to present their views to you on this subject. The Dunedin Association has wired as follows: "Dunedin Executive trust you will oppose Taylor's amendment Factory Act." The Christchurch Association writes thus: "I enclose copy of a letter received to-day from Messrs. Hayward Bros., pickle-manufacturers, with reference to this Bill, and am instructed to ask if you will be good enough to bring the matter under the notice of the Federation Executive, with the view of having the views of Messrs. Hayward Bros. represented at the proper quarter. There can be no doubt that there are many other firms throughout the colony whose employment of women must be under conditions similar to those under which Messrs. Hayward employ them, and that in the event of the Bill passing in its present shape a considerable percentage of the workers would be deprived of earning a livelihood." The following letter is from Messrs. Hayward Bros.: "Should this amendment become law, we consider it will seriously hamper a large number of the manufacturers all over the colony, and will seriously react on quite a number of the workers also. Unfortunately, there are all over the world a certain class of girls and women who, owing to their physical and mental capacity, are totally unfit for any responsible expert labour, hence they are employed at rough unskilled work. These poor women and girls are quite incapable of doing the expert and responsible work that their more fortunate and brainy sisters are capable of performing to entire satisfaction; therefore they should be allowed to earn their livelihood and work for a smaller wage than the expert worker. If the amendment in question is allowed to become law, all the manufacturers throughout the colony will be forced to dismiss and put out of employment all these poor workers who, through no fault of their own, are incapable of earning the statute wage, which we consider would be a very grave injustice. We will here give an example of what we mean: During the autumn of every year we employ from thirty to fifty women and girls peeling onions. They are all paid 3d. per gallon for the work, and, being on piecework, they come and go to work at their own convenience. Now, some of the younger women, who are nimble of finger and quick of eye, earn from £1 to £1 10s. per week, while the older women, with stiffer fingers and weaker eyesight, can only earn from 10s. to £1 per week. Now, we should be compelled, if the amendment in question were carried, to dismiss all the old ladies who cannot earn the 17s. per week, and if the State forced us to do this it would be depriving these poor old people from earning an honest few shillings, which they are in urgent need of. We trust you will supplement these remarks by your own more forcible ones, and urge the Vigilance Committee to do their utmost to prevent this very questionable amendment from becoming law. P.S.—The usual price paid for peeling onions by pickle-manufacturers in England is 1½d. per gallon, exactly half of what we pay here." Then, one of the representatives of the laundry business, who has the largest laundry in the colony, and I understand there is only one that is equal to it in the Commonwealth—in Sydney—and who was unable to be present to-day, wishes us to represent his views and the views of the laundry people generally throughout the colony. I refer to Mr. Wills, of Hanson Street, who has a large place fitted up with all the up-to-date appliances. He writes, "I wish to enter my protest against the Factories Act Amendment Bill of 1905, which provides that all female workers of twenty years or over shall receive not less than 17s. a week. (1.) I find that many females do not start laundry-work until after twenty years of age, and as laundry-work is now a science with its complicated machinery, it requires years of experience, just as other professions do, to become a competent laundress; therefore it is not reasonable, neither will my business allow me, to start such at the high rate of 17s., which is 240 per cent. higher than the present minimum fixed by law. (2.) A considerable proportion of my work is from intercolonial shipping, which, if compelled to pay higher rates, would certainly have their work done in Australian ports. I am compelled to compete with the Chinamen, who now run a considerable number of laundries in Wellington. These are not restricted to hours, and are content to live and do live in such a way that they are able to effect a saving. I am compelled to compete with charitable institutions which pay no wages (inmates merely working for food), and who are not restricted to hours. They do not come within reach of the Factories

Act, and are now able to do work at a lower rate. The amendment does not propose to reach such as aforementioned, and, indeed, they will be the benefactors. (3.) I find the best way to fix wages is according to the ability of the workers, but this cannot be done with legislation. I think the better method would be to fix the minimum wage for the first year, second year, third year, and so on. (4.) The proposed amendment, if carried, will not allow me to start inexperienced females of twenty years or over. This is not desirable, neither from the workers' standpoint nor from mine.—PHILIP WILLS, Laundry-proprietor." The members of the deputation represent a number of different industries, and a number of them will speak as to the effect of the Factories Act Amendment Bill, if passed into law, upon their several occupations.

L. H. PENLINGTON examined. (No. 2.)

3. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—A dressmaker, of Vivian Street, Wellington.

4. Do you employ many hands?—A good many—from six to twelve, according to the time of the year, up to as high as twenty.

5. According to the season of the year?—Yes. I consider this proposed amendment most unfair, as it would clash with the present Factories Act, from our point of view. Under the present Factories Act our girls commence work at fifteen or sixteen years of age, at 5s. a week, and when they are twenty years of age they are getting £1 a week. I do not think that girls should be deprived of an opportunity of learning a trade at any age, and that is where I think this amendment would be unfair.

6. How long do they usually work before they get £1 a week?—They may start at fourteen or fifteen, but after sixteen they can work without a permit, and they leave off at twenty. The amendment would also be unfair to young people.

7. The laundry people suggest in the letter read just now by Mr. Field that arrangements should be made whereby the girls should get rises every year up to the fifth year: what do you think of that proposal?—From fifteen to twenty years?

8. Yes?—That is already provided for in the Act.

9. Supposing another clause was added to the Act, simply stating that after the fifth year the girls should not work for less than 17s. per week, would that affect you?—No; but I do not know how it would apply to any other trade than mine. A girl after working at any trade for five years would be worth 17s. a week; but there are so many things affecting a matter like this. I think there should be some kind of reference given to a girl when she leaves one employer and goes to another, to show how long she has worked at the place and what she was getting. I mentioned this to Mr. Tregear, of the Labour Department, but he did not seem to like the idea. That would be a great protection to all concerned.

WILLIAM CABLE, Ironfounder, of Wellington, examined. (No. 3.)

10. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—I am at present president of the New Zealand Federation of Employers, and I have to protest against this proposed amendment of the Factories Act being passed into law. In my opinion, it will create no end of hardship and confusion in a great number of businesses as we find them to-day in New Zealand. In the case of apprentices under agreement, their agreements will be burst up, and it will work very adversely to the apprentice who is put off before his time is served. I might say that as far as the engineering trade is concerned this amendment of the Act is uncalled-for, and if it becomes law it will be the means of preventing a very great number of young fellows learning the trade at all. We have applications continually from young fellows of all ages up to that of thirty, who discover that they have some mechanical talent or bent, and who are anxious to serve an apprenticeship to the engineering. In many cases they come to learn the trade after they are twenty-one. Well, no employer will start these raw hands at 17s. a week, and they will simply have to go without learning the trade. On the other hand, it will create great confusion with apprentices under agreements at fixed rates of wages. I take it that, in the event of this becoming law, it will be optional on the part of the employer whether it operated with those apprentices whose time was not completed. Nothing would be more detrimental to the interests of a young tradesman if his papers were not clean and who had not served his full time. I look upon the amendment as one of those little pin-pricks that employers are continually suffering from. Any man who carries on his business in a legitimate way does not require this sort of hampering with his trade at all. It is well-enough known that any one who wants to make his business a success wants to pay his employees according to their merits and ability, and I consider this amendment will act very adversely to the interests of the working-class generally.

C. H. JONES, Confectioner, Wellington, examined. (No. 4.)

11. *The Chairman.*] Will you make a statement?—I can only speak as far as my experience goes, and say that in employing juveniles most of our trade is sustained and worked by young girls, and the difficulty with regard to fixing the rate for girls over twenty years of age lies in this: that if we put an advertisement in the newspaper for young girls I guarantee that two out of three of the applicants will be over twenty years of age. Only yesterday a girl came in for work, and I saw that she was much too old, although she said she did not care so much about the wages to be paid. I asked her what she had been doing, and she replied that she had been school-teaching in Taranaki. I told her she would be much better off earning her living at that, but she said her eyesight had failed. We have to start a girl at the most elementary work, and consequently we want them young; but if we have to take girls over twenty and put them alongside girls of experience earning 15s. a week we shall not be able to pay them 17s. There is a large class of girls who do not have to go to work until they are much over twenty, and then it is because their father has died or for some similar reason. In many such cases girls over twenty

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

Act. We understand that the present Act provides for the rate of wages to be paid to employees between the ages of sixteen and twenty, but so far as the rate of wages of any female over twenty years of age the Act is entirely silent, and the employers under the present Factory Act have the right to pay female workers of twenty and over any wage they choose. That, we consider, to be distinctly unfair, and we consider that the Bill which has been introduced and is now before the Committee is one that should receive the support of every section of the community. So far as we can learn, the Bill will inflict absolutely no hardship upon the employers. The only point raised in connection with the Bill is that it will detrimentally affect many of the workers, and a good deal has been made of the number of cases of individuals who have been unfortunate in early life and who desire to learn various trades after they become twenty years of age. Well, I should like to say this: that, looking at the matter from that point of view, we consider that 17s. a week is little enough for any female over twenty years of age with which to keep herself in a decent and respectable manner. I might say this: that there are trades in which the wages have been fixed according to age by the Arbitration Court irrespective of whether the workers have had any previous experience. For instance, in the butchering trade in all the districts of the colony the wages of the employees from the age of sixteen upwards are fixed according to age, and not according to previous experience, because it is recognised that the amount of service which can be rendered to an employer is governed by the physical ability of the worker. There is any amount of elementary work—we might say unskilled work—in connection with all trades and industries at which a person can earn a decent wage, although it is not skilled work or work of a technical character; but, still, the work is done by the person at an age when he or she requires to earn sufficient remuneration to keep him or her in decency. Consequently we consider that a minimum wage of £1 is little enough for any female or young fellow of twenty years of age to do this. Then, we have to look at the Act from this point of view, if possible: If young women or young men of twenty years of age are to be allowed to obtain work in the different industries at 5s. or so a week to commence with, this is going to debar to a large extent the younger boys and girls from qualifying themselves in such trades or industries, because I say, emphatically, that young fellows of twenty years and over are of more value to an employer, and more profit can be reaped from their labour, than from lads of fourteen or fifteen years of age, and the employers would naturally be more inclined to take the older youths than the rising generation, although we consider the boys are more tractable—can be better taught and grounded in the trade—than older individuals. We have been informed by the representatives of the Canterbury Trades and Labour Council that in Christchurch advantage has been taken under the present Act to pay females over twenty years of age less than the amount stipulated in the Act for females under that age, and they are advised that under the present law it is impossible to obtain any redress. It is to remedy this state of things that we understand the Bill has been introduced, and it has the most hearty support of the Wellington Trades Council and the Tailor-esses' Union of this city. I might say that in all the other industries in which females are employed in Wellington there is no organization, with the exception of the tailoresses and the match-factory employees. The Tailoresses' Union supports this Bill, as I have said; but so far as the match-factory employees are concerned, their opinion has not been obtained. We trust the Bill will be passed into law.

ANDREW COLLINS examined. (No. 9.)

16. *The Chairman.*] Do you hold office in the Wellington Trades and Labour Council?—Yes, I represent the Bakers' Union on the Council, and I am also president of the Tailoresses' Union, the Shirtmakers' Union, and secretary of the Bakers' Union and the Plasterers' Union. I might say that I have very little to add to what Mr. Cooper has said, as he dealt with the matter exhaustively. The Trades and Labour Council and the organizations I represent are unanimously in favour of the Amendment Bill brought forward by Mr. Taylor. We all consider that it is only a fair thing that if an employer requires the services of persons over the age of twenty he should pay them something like a living-wage. Our experience is that no employer—no matter what industry he may carry on—will employ labour unless he wants it. Our desire is to foster our manufactures, and also to see that the employers get fair treatment as well as ourselves; but we think that no fair employer would for one moment expect any one over twenty years of age to work for less than 17s. a week. I therefore hope, on behalf of those I represent, that the Bill will be passed into law.

17. *Right Hon. R. J. Seddon* (to Mr. Jones).] Do you consider it would be fair to the girls you have been employing, and who have received under the Act 5s. a week with an increase every year of 3s., if you were to ask them to work for less than 17s. a week after they had gone through their course?—No. They would earn more than 17s. a week by the time they were twenty years of age.

18. But if you employ people at less money, does it not prejudice the position of those who have served their course?—If I took a person on at twenty and gave her 17s. and put her alongside an experienced girl getting 8s., there would be a row at once.

19. Supposing an employer had by law to pay his apprentices up to 17s. a week, but after they had served their time their work was stopped, what would you say to a case of that kind?—I should say that would be scandalous. It would be a very mean thing to do.

20. Do you think it would be a reasonable thing to provide by Act of Parliament that all persons who had served their time should not be employed for less than 17s. a week?—We should not object to it at all. If a girl is not worth 17s. a week after she has served her time and is twenty years of age she is not worth anything at all.

21. You heard what Mr. Cooper said, that there are men and women employed at less, and they are worth more than a boy or girl at fifteen?—Not to us. Their fingers would not be so nimble as the younger ones, and in certain trades there is the danger of accidents. I should be afraid to put them on to certain work.

22. As a general principle, is it not a bad thing to start teaching people a trade at twenty years of age?—We know nothing about apprentices in our trade.

23. But would that not be detrimental to the interests of the younger people?—Well, there would be trouble in getting girls to offer themselves. We take them on sometimes at twenty when we want girls, and we have to put them on at the elementary stage of our business, such as packing caramels. We cannot put them on at anything else.

24. (To Mr. Cable). How many youths have you employed after they are twenty years of age?—The greater part of them come on when they are fifteen or sixteen, but there is a proportion that comes in after they are over twenty.

25. As a tradesman yourself, when you went through your apprenticeship what would you have said to a young fellow coming along at twenty or twenty-one to learn the trade of an engine-fitter?—Well, engineering is a very popular trade with the public, and young fellows come into it at all ages. In the Old Country necessity was the mother of invention, and we had to start young. My apprenticeship was out when I was nineteen years old.

26. The point is this: that a great lump of a fellow of twenty is able to do more than a young lad of sixteen?—Well, he gets double or treble the wages that the lad gets. Our general start is at 6s. a week, while we should start the older lad at 12s. or 15s.

27. You recognise the value of the service by giving a better wage to the adult than to the lad who is going to serve his time?—Yes, within reason. Before I came up this morning I had an application from a young fellow of nineteen who has been attending a technical college, but I would not start him if I had to pay him 17s. a week.

28. Is there any case of putting these youths to work after they have gone through their course at less wages than they received before?—No; generally their wages are trebled, or doubled, anyhow.

29. That is, in your particular business?—Yes.

30. To Mrs. Penlington). You are keeping a dressmaking establishment?—Yes.

31. How many girls have you employed at over twenty to give them their first start?—I do not like to have them if possible. I like to have them young, and to pay them the ordinary wages as laid down by the Act.

32. If that is the case, and Parliament made the Act perfect by passing the Bill, it would not hurt you?—No; but I think it is very unfair to the young people who commence at 5s. a week and have their wages increased 3s. a week every year. In her twentieth year a girl gets £1 a week if she has served her time and gone through the routine of the workroom, and it would not be fair to her if an inexperienced girl had to be paid 17s. a week. No one employing labour would do it; I am positive of that.

33. Have you known cases where girls have gone through their course, with 5s. at the start and three-shilling rises yearly, and when they have come out of their time they have got no more?—Never. When they are out of their time they are worth from £1 to £1 10s. a week, if they have been taught their trade properly.

34. You suggest that if girls start at fifteen years of age, and get 5s. a week with three-shilling rises, the Act should not interfere with them?—Yes. I think it would be quite unworkable and unbusinesslike. A girl, if she has worked steadily, is worth £1 a week when she is twenty.

35. Do you do any part of your business by piecework?—No.

36. Have you heard of some places where they do their work by piecework—the shirtmaking, for instance?—Yes; but dressmaking you could scarcely do by piecework, because it is all bespoke work.

37. But there are certain classes of work done by piecework?—Yes. I have suggested that when girls have been for a certain time working at a trade—say tailoring and shirtmaking—they should get what they earn. If the article is taken by the dozen they should be told the price paid, and their wages would be according to what they earned.

38. I suppose you served your time as a dressmaker?—Yes.

39. Would you consider it fair, after you had gone through the inconvenience and irksomeness of learning a trade, if your employer had brought in girls of twenty years of age and got them to work against you?—Certainly not.

40. Then, you support the Bill?—No; I say it would be unfair to take on girls at twenty and pay them more than the younger ones.

41. I understood you to say it would be unfair to bring a girl of twenty into competition. When you bring women in to serve their time you bring a larger number to compete with those who started earlier. Supposing you bring in women of twenty, twenty-two, or twenty-five to learn dressmaking, are you bringing them in to compete with others?—It would be unfair to the girls. I do not think any just person would say it would be fair.

42. *Mr. Taylor* (to *Mr Jones*).] Have you any women employed at all over twenty years of age?—Yes.

43. What are they earning?—£1 a week, and there is one at £1 2s. 6d., I think. We started one recently at 15s.

44. What is the age of the one getting 15s.?—Twenty-two.

45. Do you know whether she is living with her people or on what she earns?—We always ask the question, whether they are living with their parents at the time.

46. Are any of them living alone?—Yes; I think there are two sisters who are living together.

47. What are they earning?—One at £1 a week, and the other at 17s. 6d., I think.

48. They are keeping a house of their own?—Yes.

49. What proportion of your workpeople do you take on, then, that start at 5s. a week?—We never start them at 5s.; we start them at 7s.

50. What proportion of your workpeople have you taken on when they are nearing twenty years of age?—Very few, because we never take them on if possible. When over twenty they are not tractable, and do not get into the business so readily.

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.

82. And you think that if they were precluded by law it would be prejudicial to your business?—No, not to my business.

83. It would be the employee who would suffer?—Yes, certainly.

84. (To Mr. Cooper). You consider that young people of twenty years and over employed in any capacity in a factory should be entitled to 17s. a week under the Act?—Yes.

85. Do you consider that the wages of all employees working in a factory should be fixed by Act of Parliament?—No.

86. Why?—Because it is impossible. The wages of adult workers vary considerably, even amongst qualified journeymen.

87. Do they not also in respect of persons of twenty years and over?—Yes. I take it that a young fellow just out of his time at twenty years of age would be worth possibly £3 a week, but if he only started to work at that time I consider his services would be worth 17s. a week at least. He could not get decent board and lodging in Wellington even at that price.

88. Do you think the wage to be fixed for the employee, who has had no experience, should be that which would pay for his board?—I think a reasonable living-wage should be insured by the statute, and that that should be the minimum from which the employees should be graded up.

89. You consider that wage should be 17s. a week?—Yes, as the lowest possible amount that should be paid in all cases.

90. Is that one of the chief grounds on which you advocate the passing of this Bill?—Yes, it is one of the grounds.

91. Assuming that there was a young fellow of twenty who had had no previous experience of engineering and could not earn for his employer 17s. a week, would you say that in that case the employer should pay that amount when he could not earn it?—I would not suggest that he should employ him; but that young fellow might be able to get more in some other occupation—in driving a cart, for instance.

92. Then you would say to that young fellow, “You shall not be permitted to acquire a trade because you did not go to it earlier in life”?—I would not say that. It would be the employer who would say that.

93. You would be advocating a law that would prevent the young fellow from learning a trade?—I do not think so.

94. Mr. Cable says that if this amending Bill were made law it would have the effect of precluding employers from taking on young men or workers of twenty years of age and over, because if they had not had previous experience the employers could not pay them 17s. a week?—I do not admit that.

95. Then, you know better than Mr. Cable?—As far as Mr. Cable is concerned it might be so; but to my own knowledge there are employers in this city who are taking on employees of twenty-one years of age and paying them £1 5s. and providing board, and that is equivalent to £2 5s. a week, and these young men have had no previous experience.

96. Does that not prove that an employer pays the wages he can afford to pay?—I admit that the man is worth that wage to his employer, otherwise it would not be paid.

97. (To Mr. Collins). You advocate that every person shall get a living-wage?—Yes.

98. Is 17s. a week a living-wage?—To my mind, no; not in Wellington, at all events.

99. Then, why advocate 17s. a week?—We put that down as the minimum. We do not say it is a living-wage.

100. Then, is 17s. a week, in your opinion, the minimum amount a person can live on?—I do not know how they would live on that in Wellington. Say, a young fellow pays 16s. a week for his board and lodging, where would his clothing, his tobacco, or his beer come from, if he drinks beer?

101. You say that every employer should be compelled to pay 17s. a week?—Yes.

102. And now you say that 17s. is not sufficient to expect any one to live on?—Yes, but that is the minimum I think they should receive.

103. Although it is not a living-wage?—Yes; it is far from it.

104. Do you consider a man or woman should be paid a living-wage whether he or she is capable or earning it?—We always leave that point to the employer.

105. But you are going to fix this by Act of Parliament?—It is for the employer to say whether he requires the services.

106. Do you suggest that all the employees' wages should be fixed by Act of Parliament?—No; but we say that if it is fixed by Act of Parliament in this particular instance of Mr. Taylor's, 17s. a week shall be the minimum.

107. Would the Trades and Labour Council advocate an amendment of the Factories Act on the lines stated by Mr. Taylor?—Yes; and, as stated by Mr. Cooper, although other Councils have not been communicated with on this matter, we know that they uphold our action.

108. Have you conferred with them?—No.

109. Then you are here simply representing the Trades and Labour Council of Wellington?—Yes, actually speaking.

110. Did you use any influence, as a Trades and Labour Council, with Mr. Taylor to bring down this Bill?—Not that I am aware of. *Mr. Cooper:* The Wellington Council did not.

111. Do you know whether the Christchurch Council did?—I do not.

112. Did you approve of the views of Mr. Taylor in the matter?—Yes.

113. *Right Hon. R. J. Seddon* (to Mr. Cable).] With regard to boys or youths going to learn engineering at twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four, or twenty-five, I suppose it is not a question of wages at all with them?—No, it is the desire to learn the trade.

114. I suppose there are many of such cases where they actually pay a premium?—Not nowadays.

115. No premiums are paid nowadays?—No, those days are gone.

116. I suppose those young men who offer themselves are the sons of people of means or position, or how are they going to live if you only give them 10s. a week?—As a rule, the older ones start at 15s. We hear a great deal about the living-wage, but I might say that when I was an apprentice I lived on 6s. a week, and I lived well, but plain. It can be done here if a young fellow wishes to obtain a trade and puts his mind to it. He is not going to live in luxury, but he can get good, plain, nourishing food, and it makes a man of him. He has something to strive for, but some people want to bring him up with a silver spoon in his mouth, whether he wants it or not.

117. According to your evidence, if this Bill made the amount 15s. a week, so far as your trade is concerned, it would not injure you?—No.

118. *Mr. Hardy* (to *Mr. Collins*).] I think you said you approved of a living-wage?—Yes.

119. *Mr. Cooper* said, I think, that all workers are not equal. Suppose a young person of sixteen years is put on to work and gets an increase on the 5s. a week of 3s. every year, and that after that person gets to the age of twenty-one, he or she is not capable of earning the amount provided by law?—Then the employer would discharge him or her. That is happening every day of the year.

120. What provision would you make for the person who is discharged?—If he or she was not worth the wage when out of the time which the law compelled the person to receive, the employer would discharge him or her as the employers do now.

121. We will take it that she is discharged because, according to the proposal in the Bill, she cannot work for less than 17s. a week, and that she is capable of earning 14s. or 15s. a week, what provision would you make for her subsistence?—The provision in the Bill says that she would not get less than 17s.

122. But, supposing she was not worth any more than 14s. or 15s., would you turn her into the streets? What provision would you make in such a case?—I say that if an employer requires her services 17s. a week should be the minimum wage she should receive.

123. But if she was not able to earn that money, would you turn her on to the streets?—No; but my experience is that the present state of affairs is turning these girls on to the streets.

124. What would you recommend for those women who cannot earn 17s. a week, but can only earn 15s.?—Well, I say she would be worth 17s. a week.

125. But sometimes people are worth a great deal more than they can get, and I suppose *Mr. Cooper's* experience is that many of the workers do not get what they are worth. *Mr. Cooper* spoke about a young fellow getting £2 5s. I suppose, as a general rule, the employers act fairly by their employees?—As a general rule, Yes.

126. What do you propose to do with the weakly one who still wants to stick to his employer, and yet is not worth more money?—A girl would never reach the age of twenty years without being worth 17s. a week, because the yearly rises bring her wages up to 17s. That is the present minimum. If she has served her term of apprenticeship she must, according to law, receive £1, and if she continues to work after that she should not receive less than 17s.

127. When they are released from their engagement, if the law does not provide for them, what are you going to do with them?—If after serving four or five years their services are not worth 17s. a week, then they must have been wasting their time, and would be better fitted for some other occupation. They should get into some other occupation where their natural bent would find an outlet.

128. What would happen to that poor boy or young woman—they could do what they liked! Should we not consider them?—Oh, yes; we are here to lift them up.

129. *Mr. Aitken* (to *Mrs. Penlington*).] Do you ever take a girl on eighteen years of age?—Yes, if she has been working at the trade.

130. But you have never taken on an apprentice to begin at that age?—No.

131. Have you in your experience—I do not say in your own business—heard of any girl who has gone through her apprenticeship, and arrived at the age when she ceases to be an apprentice, being put back again in her wages?—No.

132. (To *Mr. Cooper*). Do you know of anything of that kind?—I have heard of it. We have been informed of it happening in Christchurch.

133. Not in Wellington?—No, not any specific case.

134. (To *Mrs. Penlington*). Have you heard of any such case?—Yes, but I never believed it. I have been in Wellington twelve years, and have found that the girls know how to look after their own interests, and their parents look after them also.

135. Were you in business when the Act was passed which compelled the payment of 5s. a week?—Yes, I think so.

136. The passing of that Act did not seriously affect your business?—No. I think every employer is now satisfied with it. I never hear any complaints about it.

137. (To *Mr. Jones*). You referred to girls applying for work who had good homes, or who had private means of their own?—Yes.

138. Do you have many applications of that kind?—Yes.

139. Is it in the interests of the community that girls in a position of that kind should willingly take a nominal wage while some one else is keeping them?—They would not get employment otherwise. I always make a point of asking what means of subsistence they have. They would not be employed if they had not something to supplement their income by, because we know they must live honestly.

140. (To *Mr. Cable*). The Premier made some references to the cessation of premiums?—Yes.

141. Do you think that has affected the employers in any way?—I do not think so.

142. *Mr. Laurensen* (to *Mr. Cathie*).] What is the highest wage you pay in your factory?—£1 10s. for female labour.

143. How long would it take an ordinary person of twenty years of age to become fairly expert in your business?—It is very difficult to make up an estimate of that sort. It depends upon ability and tastefulness. Some would never be expert. There is a good deal of adaptability in our trade. As a matter of fact I do not like to take them in at all. Sometimes we are asked to take them on as a favour, but we do not like it. Formerly we could do many of these things until the Factory Act was passed. I used to have many people, old and young, asking me to take them on, and when we were not tied by the Act we would do so. They could do something at piecework and make 10s. or 15s. a week, but now we must go by the rule. There is the Act and there is the award, and we cannot go outside of them, and we cannot do any kind-hearted act.

144. Therefore the Factory Act prevents a kind-hearted employer doing this kindness?—Certainly.

145. What effect has it had on the hard-hearted employer?—In the case of sweating it is all right; it compels him to pay a minimum wage.

146. The law after all is only for the evil-doer?—Yes; that is the reason why I think Mr. Taylor must have had something in his mind when moving this amendment. I feel that he is going to cure the evil by inflicting a greater one.

147. What we are all wanting to do is to secure some consideration for those who cannot help themselves, and at the same time avoid any friction between employer and employed. Can you suggest any way by which an employee of twenty years and over can be protected against receiving an unscrupulous wage, or any way by which we can fix a minimum wage?—If a worker has served four or five years in our trade she is earning 17s. a week, at any rate. Mrs. Penlington suggested that we should have certificates showing the date at which girls of fourteen or fifteen started their apprenticeship, and if they leave one shop to go to another the date should be given, so that the next employer would take her up where she left off. That would be a check to enable the Factory Inspector to see that the wages were being properly paid. The clothing-manufacturers also have that under consideration in their proposals to the Arbitration Court to sit next month. That would fix the amount which the worker was worth at the end of her apprenticeship. Unless circumstances arise by which there is a scarcity of labour, I do not see why the worker should not get that wage. The Arbitration Court fixes the wage, but it provides also for an "incompetent" clause, under which the wage is fixed by the Conciliation Board or Arbitration Board. This provides for the workers who, although they have served their time at the trade, are unable to earn the full wage. I can quite well see the labour members' view, that the low wages cut against those who have served their apprenticeship, but the amendment is too high; it simply prevents these young people coming in.

148. Should we fix any minimum wage after twenty years of age? We have fixed it up to twenty?—It is one of those things that I fail to see how you can legislate on without causing a hardship to some one else. Where an award gives a period of apprenticeship of so-many years they could start them on the second year, unless they show their ability. But there would be a difficulty about that.

149. *Mr. EU* (to *Mr. Cathie*).] How many hands have you taken on during the last twelve months over twenty years of age, and who have never been previously at the trade?—I do not think I have taken any. I have tried to guard against that for some years. Ever since the Act fixed the wage at 5s. a week with three-shilling rises, and there was some difficulty as to whether when they were beginning at seventeen years of age they were to start at 8s., I refused to take them on if practically they were over fifteen years of age.

150. Then, the passing of this Act would not affect your business?—Not a bit.

151. (To *Mrs. Penlington*). How many hands have you taken on during the last twelve months who had not previously been at the trade?—I could hardly say. They come and go. Perhaps a dozen or two dozen.

152. At about what age have they come to you after having been previously at the trade, and at what age have you started them?—When they come to me I ask what wages they have been getting. I ask first where they have been working, and by their answer I know fairly well what class of work they have been used to. If they tell me they received 12s. I ask them what they left for, when perhaps they tell me their employer was slack. I say, "Well, if you like to come and start for me I will give you 12s. a week, and if you are worth more you will get it." I start them generally at what they left off at at their previous employer's. But my experience has been that when they say they had been receiving 12s. I find that they had only been getting 8s.

153. You think that a certificate would be of benefit?—Yes. I have known dozens of girls who have found that the trade did not suit them go up country after a while, and when asked how long they had been at the trade say two or three years.

154. On the other hand, if a girl has served three years and holds a certificate she would be able to start at 17s.?—Sometimes a girl is useless to an employer after working two years at the trade.

155. (To *Mr. Jones*). How many hands have you taken on during the last twelve months over twenty years of age?—I do not think there have been more than four.

156. So that if the Bill were passed it would not seriously affect your business?—No. We do not take them on now more than we can help.

157. (To *Mr. Houghton*). How many hands have you taken on over twenty years of age during the last twelve months?—I have not asked them their age. I do not think we have taken on any over twenty years of age.

158. So that the passing of the Bill would not seriously affect you?—It might, in this way: that we should not employ any over that age. The younger we can get them the better.

THOMAS E. TAYLOR, M.H.R., examined. (No. 10.)

159. *The Chairman.*] You wish to make a statement?—Yes. I am informed by a number of workers in Christchurch, upon whose statements I place almost complete reliance, that there are a number of instances there of women who have earned up to 17s. a week under the present Factories Act, and have been employed after the age of twenty-one at less than 17s. a week. I cannot just now give names, but I am quite satisfied that there have been such cases in Christchurch, and there are girls now over twenty-one years of age who have been employed previously in what was alleged to be learning a trade, receiving less than 17s. a week. I have a list here of cases of girls over twenty years of age who are being underpaid. There is one girl 19½ years of age getting 8s. a week; she has been in the employ of a particular firm for four years. Another one of twenty years is earning less than 15s. in the same employ. There is another girl of twenty-two years whose wages are 12s. 6d. a week; one of twenty-one years, 15s.; one of seventeen years, 8s.; one of twenty-one years, 15s.; one between eighteen and nineteen years, 10s.; one of eighteen years, 10s. 6d.; one of eighteen years, 11s. Then I have a letter here which I propose to read. It says, "I must thank you very much for again trying to bring in an amendment to the Factories Act. I notice the Bill has passed its second reading, and I sincerely trust you will get it right through this session as quickly as possible. Another urgent need of the 17s. per week being made a compulsory wage was brought under my notice last week—namely, a shirtmaking factory in the city, where the employer pays women at the rate of 2½d. per shirt. To earn 17s. per week at this rate a girl must make eighty-two shirts—an utter impossibility. The most a girl earns at this place is 15s. . . . You will easily see how these women are 'sweated.' A girl who worked there told me that the highest amount earned was 15s., and this by a woman of thirty. If they complain they are dismissed, and dozens of others try the work. Girls are far too plentiful, hence the poor wages paid. Please do your utmost to get the Bill through early. Seventeen shillings is only sufficient for food if a girl has no home, and can we wonder so many lose their sense of honour in the struggle. Employers of women are all unprincipled in the matter of paying a living-wage. Thanking you for your kindness, I am," &c. The evidence to-day has gone to show that the employers pay what they can, but without considering the living-wage. These are some of the reasons which have induced me to bring the Bill in, and I submit that the whole of the evidence this morning shows that the Bill is a perfectly safe thing, because it only proposes to fix the minimum wage for people over twenty years of age, exactly the same as it is under the Factories Act for persons under twenty years of age. I leave the Bill to the Committee to deal with.

160. *Mr. Alison.*] Are the communications you have received from some of the persons affected, or from persons who are representing their interests?—The memos I have been reading from are from an educated workwoman in Christchurch, who is very keenly interested in the condition of her sister-workers, but she is in very good employment herself and getting perhaps £2 per week. She is a very skilled worker.

161. You gave us a list of persons receiving wages less than 17s. per week?—Yes, that comes from the woman I have referred to.

162. Have they been in employment for any length of time?—One has completed her four years.

163. Is not that a breach of the Factories Act?—Yes, and I proposed to the writer that she should take steps to bring the matter before the Labour Bureau, but she pointed out that it would lead to dismissal of the girl, and she did not want to be responsible for depriving the girl of her scanty earnings.

164. Do you consider that the non-enforcement of that law because it would be detrimental to the interests of that individual should be a reason for your urging that a further law should be made?—Yes, I still think so, because in all laws affecting wages there are isolated cases where you must allow the individual to be victimised rather than throw the person out of employment.

165. After hearing the evidence this morning, do you still consider 17s. should be the minimum?—Yes, I consider it enough for the scantiest living; in fact, I do not know how people can live on it.

166. *Mr. Aitken.*] In the list you gave us I suppose you do not know whether all the instances happen in one firm, or whether they are scattered?—There are four firms affected.

167. They are all in Christchurch?—Yes.

168. *Mr. Barber.*] You say that what you ask for is that the law which applies to an employee up to twenty years of age shall apply to employees of twenty-one years and upwards?—Yes. My contention is that there should be a minimum living-wage for every adult person in this colony. The existing law grades the wage up to the adult age, and it has just fixed a bare living-wage up to that stage.

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