

We have had rather a curious experience in Taranaki, which is the home of the dairy-farmer in New Zealand. The New Plymouth Borough Council, the Taranaki Chamber of Commerce, the Inglewood Borough Council, the Stratford Borough Council, and the Hawera Borough Council have all declared in favour of the Bill. I do not think I have very much more to say, except, in conclusion, to point out that New Zealand is most favourably placed for the adoption of "summer time." We are very favourably placed when compared with Australia and other places which are situated in the tropics. We cover a very few degrees of longitude, and the actual time in any part of the Dominion is not greatly different from standard time. The degrees of latitude in which New Zealand is situated are such as to provide very little twilight in the whole of the North Island and larger part of the South. We are completely detached from other countries. I expect in the course of the meeting of this Committee you will hear a great deal of evidence in favour of the measure and perhaps a little in opposition to it. The view of the league is that the easiest and best way to settle the question is to give it a trial for, say, five months. That is all the Bill provides for, and it has the hearty support of the organizations which I represent.

*Mr. Girling.* You are aware, of course, that many industries at the present time work an estimated number of hours within the ordinary schedule time—they put their clocks on. For instance, the sawmills, flax-mills, and so on: you are aware of that?—That does not happen in centres of population. It is done in places where it does not interfere with the services of the rest of the community. I have noticed that in some of the sawmill awards provision is made for an earlier hour of starting.

Could not this be done by mutual arrangement with respect to business premises whereby they could start an hour earlier?—I think I have dealt with that matter very fully. It is done to a certain extent at present—namely, in the soft-goods warehouses, the Civil Service, and one or two other establishments; but it can only be done to a limited extent. It is not a thing that could be put effectively into force in a partial way. As you are aware, I quoted the opinion of the last Committee of the House, and it stated they were unanimous that the best way to effect it was by legislation.

Do you not think that provision should be made whereby the farmers should not be interfered with so far as their work is concerned?—I do not think this Bill will interfere with the farmers so far as their work is concerned.

They maintain it will?—There is nothing to compel them from doing anything different to what they are doing at the present time. They are in the privileged position of being able to work as long as they like and leave off work when they like.

We will take it that the farmers will be interfered with if this Bill were passed into law?—I am not admitting that.

We will admit it for the moment: would it not be possible for the townspeople to arrange for work to commence earlier and thus close up their premises earlier?—I am of opinion that the only effective way of producing this result is by legislation.

Do you not think there is the possibility, if legislation were introduced, of some business establishments altering their hours of business, and thus defeat the aim that is desired—that is, those business establishments having a particular award confining them to certain hours?—The majority of business establishments at the present time are working under awards. Those establishments that are under no awards may be induced to adopt the practice you suggest.

Take, for instance, the retail premises in Wellington, they are able to keep open till 6 o'clock, are they not?—The closing-time for a good many of them is 5.30 p.m.

They do close at 5.30 p.m., but in a great many cases they keep open until 6 o'clock: do you not think it would be possible, if this Bill were passed, that they would start their employees half an hour earlier in the morning, and thus deprive them of the half-hour that was intended for their benefit?—I do not think so.

At the present time the shops open at 8.30 a.m. and from then until 9 o'clock they are empty, are they not?—There is any amount of work to be performed.

Could not that work be done between 5.30 p.m. and 6 o'clock? Do you not think by the shops remaining open that that would mean an increase in the number of customers?—Between 5.30 p.m. and 6 o'clock they are waiting to close up, and there is no work done at all.

Do you not think that some of the employers would try to defeat the objects of the Bill?—I do not think that they would try to do it.

But there is the possibility?—I think the Federated Drapers are keen supporters of the Bill by reason of the fact that they would like to assist their employees, and, moreover, they would like to make the best use of the daylight.

If it is impossible by mutual arrangement to get the business premises to close an hour earlier, do you not think the farmers should have the hours they have now?—I contend that the Bill does not interfere with the hours of the farmers except those who are working in conjunction with railway-trains.

If that is so, why should the Farmers' Union, as well as the local branches, pass resolutions against the introduction of the Bill?—For the simple reason they do not understand it.

You went into this question pretty fully in connection with the farmers' side of the case, and I presume you referred particularly to the dairy-farmer?—I do not think the dairy-farmer is any more affected than the agriculturist, the orchardist, or the man who has to harvest his crop. I may say that objection has been made by the harvester because he said that he could not harvest his crop on account of the dew on the ground.

Is he not under an award?—There is no award for the harvester. The only farm labourers who are bound by time are the shearers, who have a twelve-hour day, and the thrashing-machine workers.