

1. *Mr. Taylor.*] Have you the particulars of the traffic on the other days?—No. The next clause that I wish to refer to is the overtime clause. We are not exactly exercised over this clause, but I think it is one the assistants ought to look into. As employers we do not object to pay overtime. We are quite prepared to do so. But I would point out to members of this Committee that it would mean a very considerable curtailment of privileges to the assistants. At the present time, I have no doubt, it would pay many employers very much better to pay overtime than grant those privileges. There are quite a number of establishments where the proprietors not only pay their assistants full salaries every week, for holidays and all, but also pay for sick-time. It is quite a common thing to find assistants laid up for a week, a fortnight, or three weeks, as the case may be, but the pay is never stopped. If we are to pay overtime we should scarcely continue to do that. There are other houses which give bonuses to their assistants. Well, it would be quite an easy matter to balance the overtime on the bonus account. You see it would simply be a matter of adjustment; and for that reason, although we feel that it would be a pity to destroy the good-fellowship that now exists between assistants and employers in the shopkeeping trade, it would be a mistake for the Legislature to make this payment for overtime law. I do not think there is anything else I wish to say. I do not wish to detain the Committee unduly long; but there are one or two points that, perhaps, one or two other of the gentlemen here would like to refer to.

FINLAY McLEOD examined. (No. 2.)

*Mr. McLeod:* Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—My remarks will have reference chiefly to sections 7 and 14 of the Bill. In opposing those clauses I may say that we are not only re-echoing the overwhelming opinions of the great majority of the traders of this city, but we are supported by resolutions carried at public meetings in pretty well every centre. Naturally enough, there are two sides to this question—there are generally two sides to a question. Members of the Committee will recollect that recently a petition was presented on behalf of a trader—Mr. Kirkcaldie, of this city. That petition calls for a little attention at my hands. No doubt you are aware that Mr. Kirkcaldie caters for a particular class of trade. He strains every nerve to collect around him the wealthy section of the community, and the wealthy section of the community, as you are also no doubt aware, have leisure time. The ladies have a sufficient supply of servants, lady-helps, and other assistants, so they can select either the morning or the afternoon of any day in the week on which to do their shopping. On Saturday their programme usually is to attend the races, play croquet, tennis, and so forth; therefore with them Saturday is not recognised as the day for shopping. Hence Mr. Kirkcaldie's desire to have Saturday proclaimed as the day for the half-holiday. He does little or no business on that day, and, naturally enough, he is anxious that that day should be set aside as the half-holiday day. Now, gentlemen, we will look at the other side of the question, and regard it from the workers' standpoint. When I say "worker" I know that every man or woman who from necessity, desire, or inclination contributes in the slightest degree to the production of the commodities that are for the benefit of the human race is a worker. But take a typical case—take the house of a typical worker—take that of an artisan. What is the programme laid out for him for five days in the week? He has his breakfast, and leaves home for work first thing in the morning. Immediately he has gone his wife attends to the domestic duties—prepares the children for school, and so on. Immediately after they have gone the domestic duties require attention, and keep her going till dinner-time. Then her husband returns for dinner. Immediately after he has gone to work again she requires to prepare for the children returning from school at half-past 3, and her husband's return at 5 o'clock. That is her day for five days in the week. That will be borne out by any member of the Committee who looks into the matter. It is the well-regulated home that should require the attention of legislators. Saturday comes round; the husband returns from work soon after 12 o'clock with his wages—hard-earned wages; and Saturday afternoon is the only time that the husband and the wife have at their disposal to devote to procuring their requirements for the following week or fortnight, as the case may be. What does this Bill propose? It proposes to take this opportunity away from the worker; and what opportunity are you going to give him in return? You ask him to shop on Friday night—having a late night for that purpose—in preference to Saturday afternoon. Surely there is no advancement in that. I maintain that this cannot be regarded as a democratic move at all. Democracy has gone under this provision. That part of the law which allowed the local bodies formerly to regulate the matter is done away with. I myself have always claimed to be a bit of a democrat, and I have cherished that text which says, "Government of the people for the people by the people." But, sir, if this Bill becomes law I shall require to take down that text, and put this one up, "Government of the governed by Parliament for Ministers," because this Bill cannot be regarded as a democratic measure at all. Now, I wish to refer to another aspect of the question. How will this Bill affect the farming interests—how will it affect the country townships? As one who has come from Otago I can say this: I have known a good deal of the requirements of the different townships there, and from Invercargill right up to Oamaru you will find that Saturday is the day when the bulk of the shopping is done. There is more business done in Invercargill on Saturday than there is on any other four days of the week. Now, you propose to destroy that, and compel the farmer or his wife to come in on some other day to obtain their requirements. You will observe that this is not to be a universal half-holiday; the Bill does not compel, for instance, an auctioneer to close on the Saturday. He will still be able to carry on his business on a Saturday afternoon, and the farmers will be compelled to attend horse-sales on Saturday in their own interests, while the wives will have to select some other day on which to do their shopping, for the shops will be shut then. Then, look at section 14. There is something in the democratic line about this clause, because it provides for a vote of the traders, and a three-fifths majority. But, gentlemen, when you look at the interpretation of the term "occupier" you see that it is perfectly