

*Mr. Wardell*: The other word suggested was "customary," but I do not know that it would mean exactly what I wish to draw attention to. What I mean is this: the larger shops are doing a legitimate trade—a trade that no objection can be raised to; and if you make this proposal law you handicap them from doing this trade to which no objection can be made. The trade that they are doing is legitimate in that respect—that no objection can be made to it.

*Mr. Laurenson*: Then, I ask, can any objection be made to the trade that the small man is doing out in the suburbs?

*Mr. Wardell*: Not at all. I have no objection.

*Mr. Laurenson*: Then, I ask again, will any less meat be eaten or less tea drunk or less clothes worn if the half-holiday is changed to Saturday?

*Mr. Wardell*: No, certainly not; but instead of the larger traders doing the trade, as I have stated, you will drive it into the hands of Chinamen and people who do business till a later hour than other storekeepers.

*Mr. Laurenson*: Are Chinamen, then, exempt from the law?

*Mr. Wardell*: The effect of the early-closing provisions in this Bill will be that the Chinamen in Wellington will out-vote the white grocers.

*Mr. Laurenson*: Are the Chinese grocers exempt from the law?

*Mr. Wardell*: They are not exempt from the law, but the effect of this Saturday half-holiday will be that the trade will be done after 6 o'clock on the other nights of the week. The bulk of the late shopping done in the grocery business is in the Chinamen's hands.

*Mr. Laurenson*: Then, if we pass a law fixing certain hours for closing-time the Chinaman is going to be exempt, is he?

*Mr. Wardell*: No; but under the proposal here a Chinaman has an equal right to vote with us.

*Mr. Laurenson*: But he is brought under the law the same as the white man; so it will not drive trade into the hands of the Chinaman?

*Mr. Wardell*: But he will outvote us as to the hour for closing under clause 14, because he has the power to vote the same as the white man.

*Mr. Laurenson*: I would like to ask whether any member of the deputation here was in business prior to the law being passed which compelled a weekly half-holiday to be observed?

*Mr. Allan*: Yes; I was in business then.

*Mr. Laurenson*: Do you remember the uproar that was raised throughout the colony, and do you remember the prophecies of blue ruin that were made then in connection with the introduction of a weekly half-holiday on any day in the week?

*Mr. Allan*: Yes.

*Mr. Laurenson*: Do you remember that there was far more agitation then against a half-holiday at all than there is now against even the half-holiday being given on Saturday?

*Mr. Allan*: Possibly.

*Mr. Laurenson*: Is any less trade being done by the average business-man in New Zealand since that half-holiday was introduced than was done before?

*Mr. Allan*: No; I do not think so.

*Mr. Laurenson*: There is another question I would like to ask. Some one—you, I think—objected to wages being paid on a Friday. I do not know what the case is in Wellington, but I am going to ask about Christchurch. Are you aware that in Christchurch almost every place where there is a large number of employees pays its hands on Friday?

*Mr. Allan*: I never heard that statement.

*Mr. Laurenson*: I will name some of the places. The Kaiapoi Woollen-factory pay their hands on Friday.

*Mr. Allan*: Do they finish up their work every Friday?

*Mr. Laurenson*: I do not know that, but they pay their wages on Friday night. I could go on naming other places. In Christchurch, with hardly a single exception, the large foundries and businesses pay of a Friday night.

*Mr. Allan*: That is information to me.

*Mr. Laurenson*: I would like to ask Mr. Wardell if he is aware of this: almost without exception every large business in Christchurch—Ballantyne's, Strange's, Ashby Bergh's, Mason Struthers's, the Farmers' Co-operative Association (which is particularly for farmers)—every one of those large places, which between them employ, I suppose, three out of every five men employed in shops, warehouses, and businesses in Christchurch—every one of them has signed a petition to have the half-holiday fixed for Saturday?

*Mr. Wardell*: You do not mention a trade in which I am interested in that list.

*Mr. Laurenson*: I do not want to know about your trade. I ask you, are you aware that what I have just stated is the case?

*Mr. Wardell*: With those firms you have mentioned; but there are other important firms that you have not mentioned.

*Mr. Laurenson*: Are you aware that it is so with the firms I have named?

*Mr. Wardell*: Yes; and I am also aware that the bulk of those firms that you have mentioned are drapers and wholesale ironmongers. We have exactly the same position in Wellington here. Firms of the class of Kirkcaldie and Stains and Whitcombe and Tombs, and ironmongers of the class of Duthie and Co. and Briscoe and Co., are desirous of the same thing. We admit that there is one class of shopkeepers who are in favour of Saturday closing; but we say that their interests are not the same as those represented by the deputations here.

*Mr. Laurenson*: You say the half-holiday on Saturday had been tried in Napier, Auckland, and Christchurch, and had been more or less a failure. I will name a small town where it was tried—Lyttelton. Do you know that?

*Mr. Wardell*: No.