

goods to close for so long a time?—Well, it seems rather absurd that tobacconists and photographers should be allowed to remain open.

37. You think that fishmongers, fruiterers, and trades with perishable goods should not have an exemption?—If it is to be a Saturday half-holiday it should be a half-holiday all round.

38. *Mr. Aitken.*] One of the deputation said he would like to see a provision in the Act that every shop should close at 6 o'clock—of course, allowing them to open on the late night. Would there be any chance of any one starting business in a small way under those conditions?—I do not see why the fact of having to close at 6 o'clock on certain days should prevent them entering into a business.

39. Is it not a fact that these small shops do a large trade when the big ones are closed?—No doubt; but how many of these small shops are run by men who are at work during the day and then, when they return from their work, keep their shops open till all hours, while those who employ labour and have stringent conditions imposed upon them are compelled to close early. It is rather a handicap on those who employ labour.

40. Your contention is this: that half the population has to work so as to supply the other half. That is to say, you would like to have a universal half-holiday—everybody to be brought into line. That means that you would not have trains running or 'busses or tram-cars, for it would be necessary to employ men to do that work so as to serve the other half of the population?—That is the contention. It is not as though it were an occasional half-holiday, where one section can close on one day and another on another.

41. Supposing it were universally decided that Saturday should be the half-holiday, would not that distribute the trade more into the suburbs and more into the country?—More into the suburban towns.

42. I am looking at it now from your point of view of the whole population. Would the tendency be that the working-classes would have to pay more for their goods? Is it not a fact that large returns tend to keep prices down?—Yes.

43. And if you did not get your Saturday trade you could not sell so cheap, and the tendency would be that the working-classes would have to pay more?—Yes; and principally those who come into town from the country. People coming into the towns tends to keep the country prices down and more fair than they would be if it was compulsory for people to come in on other days. The tendency would then be to get a little more profit in the country.

44. *Mr. Ell.*] With regard to the overtime provision, Mr. Wardell, you speak for the assistants themselves, and you think that the assistants do not want this provision?—I understand that there has been some agitation on the subject in Wellington; but what we ask is that it should be left to the Arbitration Court. That Court considers special matters connected with each trade and makes its award accordingly; and we say that it should be left to the Arbitration Court award. For instance, ironmongers require a long time overtime when they are taking stock, whereas grocers require it at Christmas-time, and under the award we do not pay for that overtime. I think the Arbitration Court should make the award in the future as it has done in the past.

45. You argue that if the assistants were granted this overtime they would lose other privileges and concessions which they now have?—I think that is so.

46. And that it would be likely to be better for the masters if the overtime were paid for and the present privileges and concessions to assistants were done away with?—I think that as a rule it is absolutely necessary that there should be some give-and-take, and that hard-and-fast rules are not an advantage, but that it should be left to the Arbitration Court to fix these matters. I understand that the drapers' assistants, too, are anxious that this should not be brought about because they also would lose some of the concessions which they now get.

47. With regard to hotel-bars you think that they should be brought into line with other trades?—I am not so sure if the half-holiday were on Wednesday, but if the shops have to close on Saturdays then the men will be driven into the hotel-bars. I do not think I should say anything about it if the holiday were on Wednesday. The two things are very different. If the half-holiday is to be on Saturday this closing of hotel-bars is of importance, but if the half-holiday were on Wednesday it would not be of so much importance.

48. You argue that you see no reason why fishmongers, fruiterers, and those with perishable goods should be exempted on Saturday?—If you are going to say, "You must have a half-holiday on that day," then I say there should be no exemptions, but if it is a matter of arrangement, then you can arrange the time most suitable for everybody.

49. You prefer leaving it in the hands of the local authority?—No; these local authorities are cropping up on every occasion. What we should like to see is that Wednesday should be made the half-holiday, with a provision that those who wish to keep open on that day and close on Saturday can do so.

50. *Mr. Aitken.*] The Arbitration Court have given you an award?—Yes; but that award would not apply to all shopkeepers. There are many who do not come under that award. We do not object to the other parts of the Bill, fixing the hours and so on; but we say that where there has been an award by the Arbitration Court that award should remain. It would be much better if the Wednesday were fixed for the half-holiday, for at present there are shops closing on almost every day of the week.

51. Is it not the small man who keeps open late?—Yes.

52. Are you not trying to crush the small man?—No; I would give the small man fair play, but it is he who is trying to crush us.

53. You say that a change was made in Dunedin some years ago, but that the working-people were glad to return to the old system?—Yes.

54. Could not the matter be settled by having a referendum in the district?—There is this objection to that course: that it is very difficult to get people to go and vote on a small question like this.