

for an apprentice entering it. It is, of course, a matter of opinion, but I can say that no one would be bothered with apprentices without a premium. We have to take a youth and educate him for his business, and he is of very little use to us. With regard to the hours of labour, our hours, at times when it is necessary, are longer than are provided for, but my assistants do not work altogether more than fifty-two hours a week. In cases of emergency one of them may have to work more than ten hours on some day, but then he gets off on another day. The provision for closing at 6 o'clock would be very inconvenient for the public. With regard to the Saturday half-holiday, that is a matter which is very immaterial to us. That is all I wish to say, but I shall be glad to answer any questions.

11. *Mr. Tanner.*] Do you think that the present restrictions on the trade are such as to create friction and inconvenience?—They do not here, because we have a sensible Inspector, and he does not insist upon a strict interpretation of the law; but a friend of mine in Auckland tells me that they are very much annoyed by the restriction there. The Inspector there reads the law that there shall be no assistant in the shop on the Saturday afternoon, and the masters have to do the work themselves.

12. Are you aware that apprentices were entirely exempted from the provisions of the Shops and Shop-assistants Act?—That is so. We were classed with fruiterers, fishmongers, and so on, and so were excluded from the provisions of the Act.

13. And afterwards, on petition to this House, they were included?—Yes. For my own part I think the work during the two hours in the evening would be too much for one hand. I, myself, have often to go down and help. My son may be in the office or one assistant, and they find the work so pressing that they ring me up, and I have to go down and assist.

14. *Mr. Aitken.*] I understand that one of the points you object to is that on the half-holiday you are only allowed to serve prescriptions made up by a doctor?—Yes.

15. Your contention is that that is going to throw the business into the hands of the profession?—Oh, no; that is not the objection. I am thinking of the convenience to the public.

16. I myself think, and the Committee may think, that if the convenience of the public is to be considered in the matter you should never close; that you should keep open night and day. You gave the instance of a boy coming in with a cut finger, and that a chemist would not be able to attend to it. Do I understand you to mean that that would throw it into the hands of the profession?—I do not think that chemists are entitled to perform these small operations. No doubt the public could go to a doctor, but the fees are so prohibitive that they will come to the chemists. There is no doubt that a chemist who performs these small surgical operations is taking a great responsibility.

17. What percentage of the medical men, in this town, for instance, do their own dispensing?—Very few.

18. *Mr. Colvin.*] You are in favour of apprentices paying a premium?—Personally speaking, I have not taken an apprentice on for years, because they are more trouble than profit. If it were not that a premium is allowed, I do not think that any chemist would take an apprentice. The result would be that they would get assistants from other places, and there would be an influx from Australia.

19. How long would it be before an apprentice would be useful?—Well, you could employ him as a boy in the shop, but you could not trust him to make up a prescription until after three years' apprenticeship.

20. *Mr. Bedford.*] What amount is paid as premium?—As much as £100 has been paid in some instances, but the usual thing is about £50. I only take the premium as an earnest of goodwill. I have had two apprentices, one of whom has been with me for over twenty-five years. I got £50 premium with him, and gave him 10s. a week to start with.

21. *Mr. Ell.*] With regard to this premium, you say that if you did not get £50 premium you would not take an apprentice?—I would not.

22. And you pay them about 10s. a week?—Ten shillings to begin with, and then increase it to 15s., and up to £1 5s. a week.

23. You are aware of the provisions of the Factory Act?—Yes.

24. And of the wages under that Act?—Yes.

25. Do you not think they would be in a much worse position if you paid simply the legal wages?—It depends upon the class of boy. Under the Pharmacy Act we have to get boys of superior education.

26. You are an employer, and you take the boy who is well educated and fit for the work. Is it not so?—Yes.

27. You would not be in a worse position financially under this Bill?—I should be in a much worse position. If I get £50 premium with a boy, it virtually pays his wages for the first two years. You can afford to pay him a good wage, whereas if there is no premium, you will only give him 5s. or 7s. 6d. a week, and then he does not think he is properly paid.

28. You are aware that it does not hinder them doing their work with a good heart?—I think their heart is more in the football-field than in their work.

29. Would not the demand of a premium place this calling beyond the reach of very poor people?—Yes, that is very likely.

30. And would not the effect of removing that premium place them on a better footing?—Yes, if sufficiently educated.

31. *Mr. Sidey.*] I understand that you are representing other persons in the same profession?—No; I am entirely "on my own," although I am president of the Pharmacy Board of New Zealand.

32. Have they not had a meeting to consider this question?—Not that I am aware of. By the way, I think they had, and they thought it better to leave the matter alone.

33. I understand you are in favour of the Saturday half-holiday?—Yes.

34. What volume of trade do you do on Saturdays?—Very little more than on other days. The fact of the matter is that we have now two broken days in the week, and if there were Saturday closing we should only have one. On Wednesday we have to close, and on Saturday I allow two