

47. You are aware that this Bill has been before the whole colony for several weeks?—I know very little about the matter except what Mr. Harrison has told me. I understand that there was a petition presented by solicitors' clerks to the House on a previous occasion.

48. The Bill is well known to them, and yet they have not come here to protest against it?—The only reason why they are not here is that I desired to save the time of the Committee as much as possible. It is quite a fallacy to suppose that the New Zealand Law Society is making this objection in the interests of the employers. It affects the interests of the clerks and of the public as well.

49. But the clerks should come?—I shall be very happy to tell them to come.

50. *Mr. Colvin.*] Do you not think that the argument which you bring forward on behalf of lawyers' clerks would apply to all other clerks?—No; clerks in a lawyer's office are in a different position from the majority of that class who are referred to in this Bill. You constantly find them devoting a substantial portion of their time to what is purely educational work. They apply every spare moment to this educational work, and that is why there is a difference between the relationship of a lawyer with his clerk and the ordinary relationship between an employer and his clerk.

51. Is not that a better reason for arguing that if they had a half-holiday they would be able to devote more time to this educational work?—They get half-holidays enough as it is. I may say that they take up much of their employers' time now in educating themselves, and they get their half-holiday very frequently, and why you should impose these legislative restrictions I cannot understand. Their effect will only be to create unpleasantness between the lawyer and his clerks.

52. *Mr. Aitken.*] It would disturb the good feeling which now exists between the employer and his employees?—I am quite sure of that. The Act, I am certain, would be practically a dead-letter, until some day there might be an annoying prosecution, and the result would be that there would be a tendency in the minds of the lawyers to restrict the privileges which they now grant to their clerks.

53. *Mr. Ell.*] You ask that the employees shall not come under the provisions of this Act?—Yes.

54. Are you aware that they come under the provisions of the Acts of 1894 and 1896?—I was not aware of it, I must confess.

55. And there has been no break in the relationship of employer and employee in consequence?—If they are under the provisions of those Acts, then the Acts have not been enforced.

56. There would be no objection to continuing under the existing law?—No.

57. *The Chairman.*] So long as it is not enforced?—Perhaps.

58. *Mr. Ell.*] Is it not a necessity that sanitary rules should be carried out?—Yes.

59. And that there should be no close confinement?—The lawyer's clerk works about six hours and a half a day, so that there is not much close confinement in his case.

60. *Mr. Laurensen.*] You will admit that as a rule laws are made for bad men and not for good and liberal men. You will admit also that there are employers who insist on their employees coming back at all hours?—I have never known that done here. I was a lawyer's clerk myself, and my contention is solely confined to solicitor's offices, because of the fact that the position of employer and employee frequently changes. I can point out many cases in Wellington where the employee has developed into the employer.

61. This Bill fixes the maximum hours of work, and you contend that there are many occasions on which a clerk would have to go back to work at night?—Yes.

62. You work on an average twenty-five days a month. Under this Act there is a provision that a young man can be brought back to work one night out of three. That, surely, is ample provision for overtime. If a witness comes in late and a clerk has to take his evidence, is it not ample provision that you should be able to bring him back till ten o'clock one night out of three?—I can only tell you my own experience. A case comes on on Tuesday, and a witness comes in late on the previous evening, and I have to ascertain what evidence he has to give, and perhaps I am not able to leave my office until two o'clock in the morning, and I must have a clerk with me.

63. I suppose you are too merciful an employer to make your clerks work from eight o'clock in the morning till two o'clock next morning?—All I can say is that many clerks would be very glad to do so because of the experience which it would give them. I have a great deal of Court work, and it is good work for the clerks, as it gives them experience. You will find many of them working at educational matters until late at the Supreme Court library.

64. Would you be in favour of regulating the hours of offices generally?—I could not say anything about that.

65. I know of merchants' offices in Christchurch which are kept working till eleven o'clock at night and later, and where the employees are brought back constantly. Should not that be regulated?—I have no sympathy with that.

66. *The Chairman.*] With regard to these articulated clerks, do they pay a premium?—No; or if it is done at all it is a very rare case. I have been in practice in Wellington for nearly twenty years, and I have never received a premium.

67. I am very pleased to hear that. Is there still a law which limits the number of articulated clerks?—No, sir; there never has been.

68. There was a law in force in England to that effect?—Possibly, sir; but it has not been in force in New Zealand. No doubt, so far as the master was concerned, he was supposed to educate his pupil; but the only advantage he had was the office experience. As a matter of fact, you will find every clerk in a lawyer's office now striving to become a member of the profession.

69. *Mr. Colvin.*] Is it not the same in every employment in New Zealand, that the employee of to-day may be the employer of to-morrow, equally as well as in the legal profession?—To some extent that may be quite correct, but the advantage in connection with the profession is that you do not require capital to start. It is only experience and education that you have to rely upon, and that is where this class of employee is differentiated from others.

70. But in other businesses in life, if a young fellow makes his way and has no examination