

Mr. Walker : We should like to have the referendum, but as clause 7 of the Bill stands a small number of the people could make it compulsory, and then there would very soon be an agitation to have it changed.

Mr. Dickson : The Inspector has to try and do justice to all, but it is a difficult thing so to do when some close on Wednesday, some on Thursday, and others on Saturday. There is now a great difficulty in the way of the local Inspector with so many different days made half-holidays ; but if there were only one half-holiday in the week, then the Inspector could go round and see that no shops were open.

93. *Mr. Hardy.]* You say that you are placed in a different position from the factory-hands, and yet you acknowledge that there is a deduction from their wages if they are absent, with the exception of boys and girls?—As far as the shops go, there is nothing stopped from the girls who are engaged in the workrooms. They come into the class of factory-hands.

94. But the great bulk of the factory-workers are men and women who are engaged at so-much per week. Is it not customary if men are not in their places when they are supposed to be there that a deduction is made from their wages?—I think so.

95. Consequently they are not placed in a more favourable position than the others?—They are placed in a more favourable position in this respect: that they are paid for the statutory holiday, and we are not, because we lose the half-holiday.

96. Are you in favour of being paid for overtime?

Mr. Dickson : We are not in favour of it as far as shops are concerned. At present the assistants are paid more permanent salaries, and do not lose if they are ill. If they were paid overtime they would lose many of the privileges which at present they get ; but if we go off for a day or two, then there is a deduction from our wages.

97. *Mr. Hardy.]* Are you aware of the custom in Canterbury and Otago?—No.

98. Are you aware that it is the custom there to allow a man to go off for ten or twelve days without making a deduction from his pay?—Then, you are more generous than they are with us.

99. We get good men?—No doubt if that is the custom.

100. *Mr. Barber.]* Do you prefer to have the Act at present in force to having a provision for paying for overtime?—Well, we did not come down with any instructions to express an opinion on that subject. For myself, I do not think that it would be advisable to have a system of paying shop-assistants for overtime? In the shop in which I am employed we do not have any night-work, except occasionally, and then the hands arrange among themselves who shall come back. The suggestion I would make is that the assistants should be allowed to be employed for a certain amount of overtime without increased pay. That is the custom in Auckland.

Mr. Mackinlay : The question of payment for overtime is not a burning question with us. We think it is not necessary, and that it is not worth considering.

101. *Mr. Hardy.]* The Bill makes it compulsory, and you would support the Bill. Do you not think that the man who treats his employees liberally should pay them if they have to go back to work?—Not if he treats them liberally in other ways. As far as we are concerned, if we have to go back to work at night we get our tea-money, and we are quite contented with the present arrangement.

Mr. ROBERT FRENCH, Mr. JOHN RENDELL, and Mr. THOMAS PROSSER in attendance.
(Nos. 25, 26, and 27.)

The Chairman : We understand, gentlemen, that you have come here to give evidence with regard to the Shops and Offices Bill. Will you be good enough to make such a statement as you think proper, and then the Committee will ask you questions.

Mr. French : I beg to say, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, that I represent the Grocers' Union of Auckland. The Grocers' Union wish to call attention to two or three matters in connection with the Bill. First, with regard to the definition of "shop-assistant" and "office-assistant," there is a contrast in the Bill which we think may lead to great inconvenience. We consider that the word "clerical" in the definition of "shop-assistant" should be omitted. The second matter is in connection with section 3, which reduces the shop hours as fixed by the Arbitration Court from fifty-three hours a week and ten hours a day to fifty-two hours a week and nine hours a day. Then, subsection (2) of the same section conflicts with the award of the Court. I refer to the provision with regard to stocktaking. Under this Bill you have to give written notice to the Inspector, to which our union objects, because we do not know when pressure of business may require extra hours. Again, the award of the Arbitration Court makes provision for fifty hours' overtime in the year without payment, and this Bill reduces that time to thirty hours in the year, and we object to that. We consider that section 4 is rather too strict, because all shop-assistants are not regularly employed, and sometimes men have to be taken on for a short time when there is a press of work, and this section would lead to much inconvenience. Then, we think that in subsection (b) of that section there should be an exemption in regard to carters. In winter-time especially carters would prefer to get their work done and then go off, but under this provision they will not be able to do so. In regard to section 7, which refers to the weekly half-holiday, we ask for the retention of the present shop hours, as determined by the conference, within large districts. In Auckland we find that in one or two places the suburban district abuts upon the city, and it is extremely awkward, because one side of a street may have to keep the half-holiday while the other side has its shops open. Our union strongly objects to this, and would prefer to adhere to the decision of the conference. Another thing is that there should be two days in the week on which a shop can close—Wednesday and Saturday—and the shopkeeper should be allowed to give a month's notice of the day on which he elects to close. We recognise that at present there are so many days on which a shop may close that it is very inconvenient to the public, and we think that there should be only two days on which a shop could