

*Mr. Rendell:* We do not say that the volume of trade would not be the same, but what we object to is the distribution of it. We know that business is very flighty, and that if we lose customers it is very hard to get them back again. No shopkeeper would care to move his shop from one side of the street to the other, because he would know that he would lose his customers. If you divert your customers from where you are trading they will not come back again. We had an experiment of that sort in Auckland eight years ago. I was not so strong a man in business then as I am now, and I know that it dislocated my trade for several months. It would have the same effect upon the small shopkeepers now. They never collect the money due to them until Saturday, and if you compel them to close on that day they will lose the whole of that.

116. *Mr. Davey.*] You say that you represent the associated shopkeepers of Auckland?—Yes.

117. What does that embrace?—The drapers and the bootmakers and the fancy goods trade, and that sort of thing.

118. Does that include Queen Street?—Yes. Fifty of the shopkeepers in that street have signed the petition.

119. Any of the large ones?—No; they close already at 1 o'clock on Saturday, and whatever happens they will not be affected.

120. You said that as far as your business is concerned a large number of factory-hands and people of that class do their business with you on the Saturday?—Yes.

121. Does it not strike you that they could not do that business unless they had the half-holiday?—No.

122. You do not object to their having the half-holiday on Saturday?—Of course not. There is one thing which I have omitted to mention, and that is with regard to Labour Day. I was instructed to object to shopkeepers being compelled to keep Labour Day as a holiday, for this reason: that we do not deduct wages from our hands if they are away for a day or two sick. Of course, if they are away for a week or two we have to reckon with them, but we do not deduct anything from their wages if they are away sick for a day or two, and we think that we should not be obliged to pay them when they are away on Labour Day.

123. Do you know of your own knowledge what is the ordinary custom?—I understand that one large firm used not to deduct wages from employees when they were away, but since these compulsory laws have been in force they do not pay their hands if they are away for any reason.

124. Not if they are away on account of sickness?—If they are away for a day or two through sickness they are paid, but if they are away for a fortnight they have to be reckoned with. I should perhaps pay them if they were away for a week on account of sickness.

125. Would you object to a referendum to the people as to the day for the half-holiday?—I do not think so, provided we had sufficient notice.

126. Would you have any objection to the political roll being used for that purpose?—I assume that the political roll would have to be used, and I would not object to that if we had sufficient notice beforehand.

127. *Mr. Sidey.*] Within what radius should the referendum be taken?—Within a radius of about eight miles.

128. With regard to the volume of trade, you told us that the volume of trade would be the same if you had the Saturday half-holiday?—Yes; but there would be a shaking-up on all hands, and we do not know what might come about.

129. Could you suggest where the trade would go?—I can only say that it might not come to my shop, and therefore I speak feelingly. It seems to me very much like shaking a pair of dice and not knowing how they may come down; and I do not know what may be the result of this change if it is brought about. We do considerably more business on the Saturday than on any other day in the week.

130. In the afternoon and evening?—In our Newton shop we are busy from the moment we open till we close. Newton is about a mile from the city.

131. You have a petition which you wish to present to the House?—Yes; I have brought it with me.

132. To what extent is it signed by the suburban shopkeepers?—By 90 per cent. of them.

133. What steps were taken to obtain the signatures?—There was a meeting of about a hundred and fifty shopkeepers, at which a committee was nominated, and they were asked to go round and get signatures, and they went round two-and-two and got them.

134. Were you aware that another petition was being sent round?—Of course we knew it.

135. You are aware that there was a small petition signed by about sixty shopkeepers in Queen Street. Does that represent the feeling of the shopkeepers in Queen Street?—No; because we know that a great many were against it.

136. We have been told that Auckland is different from other places in this: that its market day is on Friday?—Yes.

137. Also that the volume of trade on Friday is pretty well equal to that on Saturday?—It would be in Queen Street. We take as much as 20 per cent. more in the Queen Street shop on the Friday than we do on the Saturday, but in the Karangahape Road I am kept busy from 10 o'clock on the Saturday until I close. In the afternoon the place is crowded, and in the evening it is as much as we can do to serve our customers.

138. The Saturday closing was tried for a time?—Yes; and, as I say, it dislocated my business for fully four months.

139. Was the Saturday closing universal?—It was not universal; but I was away at Taranaki at the time, and cannot say to what extent it was carried.

*Mr. French:* I may say that Newton is now really a part of the city. It is no longer a suburb, and Karangahape Road is the second most important street in Auckland.

140. *Mr. Sidey.*] When the Saturday half-holiday was introduced, over what area was it carried out?—Over the city and suburbs.