

drapers and others on Lambton Quay want to close on Saturday. It must also be remembered that tobacco is a luxury, and people purchase more on Saturday than on other days, because next day is Sunday, and they generally smoke more on that day than they do on any other. They would also shave themselves if the saloons were closed. The consequence is that if the Saturday closing is brought into force we might just as well close for the whole day on Saturday, because employees and labourers cannot get away until the middle of the day, and we shall be closed at 1 o'clock. They would not purchase these small luxuries and extras on the Friday, and they constitute the chief part of our business; and if we lose that trade on the Saturday it will make it very difficult for us to carry on, particularly when we have such severe conditions placed upon us as the Arbitration Court enforces. It now takes us all our time to carry on. Some people say that the half-holiday makes no difference, but I can assure you, and I can prove it by my books, that the Wednesday closing makes a difference of £60 or £70 a year in my takings. That is the effect of closing on the Wednesday afternoon, and I can only say that if we have to close on the Saturday the result will be disastrous.

Statement read by WILLIAM GILBERT.

This deputation, which has been specially appointed to oppose the Saturday-closing clause in the Shops and Offices Bill, represents practically the whole of the master hairdressers and tobacconists of Wellington.

Reasons why we as a trade oppose Saturday closing:—

1. First of all the clause exempts hairdressers allowing them to choose another day, but as nearly all the hairdressers are also tobacconists the exemption can only apply to one or two shops, thus creating an injustice to the rest of the trade.

2. In our line of business Saturday's turnover is equal to and often exceeds that of three ordinary days; this being so, we submit that to tamper in any way with our best day's business is simply to court disaster and to impose a serious risk on all engaged in this trade.

3. Those who favour Saturday closing argue that what business is lost on Saturday is made up during the week. Our experience proves that, so far as our business is concerned, this is not the case, as in every instance where we have lost, through bad weather or some other cause, a portion of our Saturday's business it is never made up.

4. There are special reasons why Saturday is such a busy day in this business, reasons which would in no way apply to Friday. For instance, a large number of working-men living at a distance, owing to their getting off on Saturday afternoon, make it their business to come into the city and get all they require in the way of shaving and tobacco, and thus prepare themselves for the Sunday. Were we closed on Saturday we must lose that class of trade, which is considerable. We should also lose a large portion of our ordinary trade, as it would be utterly impossible for most of our customers to get their shaves before 1 o'clock on Saturdays, and a shave on Friday night would not be any good for Sunday, as one and all like to have a clean face for Sunday; therefore they would be compelled to do it themselves. We should thus lose heavily in this respect.

5. We as a trade are convinced that should Saturday closing become law a large portion of our cigarette and cigar trade would drift to the hotels. We already suffer in this respect, but under the altered conditions our trouble would be very much accentuated. We would urge the Committee to consider this point very carefully. I have spoken to quite a number of our assistants on this subject, and they agree with us in our opposition to the Saturday-closing clause.

In conclusion we trust that the Committee will see its way to recommend that the weekly half-holiday be allowed to remain as at present. We feel assured that the proposed alteration would result in serious loss, seeing that in every case where it has been tried they have had to revert to the old order of things.

4. *Mr. Colvin.*] You stated, Mr. Batkin, that your neighbour can sell tobacco and cigars and cigarettes on seven days in the week, and that you can only sell them on five days and a half?—Yes.

5. In what business is your neighbour?—A hotelkeeper; and my contention is that a person who wishes to buy a cigar or cigarette or tobacco on Sunday can do so in a hotel when he cannot come to me whose business it is to supply that class of goods.

6. But the hotel-bars are supposed to be closed on Sunday?—Yes; they are supposed to be closed, but I do not think it is much more than a supposition.

7. But if the bar is supposed to be closed, then they can only sell cigars and cigarettes and tobacco on six days in the week?—Just so, but the shops are absolutely closed.

8. Do the clubs also sell cigars and cigarettes and tobacco?—Yes; my experience is that they do sell them.

9. You think it would be a serious thing for you if you had to close on the Saturday afternoon and evening?—I can say, after fifteen or sixteen years' experience, that it would be a very serious loss to us if we had to do so. We do not want to prevent other people closing on the Saturday afternoon if they desire to do so. All we say is, do not close us.

10. *Mr. Sidey.*] Do I understand, Mr. Richards, that the deputation has been specially appointed by the Hairdressers and Tobacconists' Association to represent them?—Yes; at our last meeting it was left to the committee to appoint members of a deputation, and we were appointed.

11. This is an association of tobacconists and hairdressers?—Yes.

12. Does the association include the whole of those in the trade in Wellington and the suburbs?—It represents practically the whole of them.

13. Do hairdressers and tobacconists in the outlying districts belong to the association also?—We represent those in Petone. Of course, other towns are further away, and are differently situated from us.