

ERNEST C. FOUNTAIN examined. (No. 5.)

167. *The Chairman.*] Where do you come from?—Christchurch
168. Are you a dentist by profession?—I am not a dentist, but am practising dentistry.
169. You are not registered?—No.
170. Are you speaking on behalf of the unregistered men in Christchurch, or on your own behalf?—On behalf of the unregistered men.
171. You have been authorised by them to come up here and give evidence?—Yes.
172. Will you make a statement?—I have a few notes here and will read them. The present Act allows unregistered persons to practise dentistry, but not to call themselves dentists. The dentists have encouraged the unregistered persons to practise. The New Zealand Consolidated Dental Company, which is carried on by the shareholders—the shareholders being the dentists of New Zealand—have allowed the unregistered persons to purchase their stock from the company, and, furthermore, they have issued shares to the unregistered persons. For eleven years nearly every doctor in Christchurch was only too pleased to, and did, administer an anæsthetic for an unregistered person until June, 1903, when the dentists wrote to the Medical Association asking them to desist from so doing. The Medical Association held a conference and brought the matter up for discussion, and decided not to continue to administer an anæsthetic for unregistered persons. There was much controversy about the matter, and some of the medical profession would not abide by the decision, two very prominent medicos—both being Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons, England—and three of Christchurch's oldest and most prominent doctors being among the number who would not abide by the association's decision. One of the doctors wrote to the Medical Association stating that it was a shame to try and boycott these men, who were good operators and who had been practising so many years, and that he understood the dentists were framing a Bill which they would shortly present to the House of Representatives, and in which they would include a clause whereby these unregistered persons might be registered, meaning the Bill Mr. Sidey has presented. Now, this present Bill before the House excludes the unregistered persons and thereby prevents them from carrying on their practice as hitherto. Some of these unregistered men have wives and families, and if the Bill is carried as it stands these men will be great losers, and will be thrown out of employment.
173. Have you anything to add to that?—No.
174. *Mr. Sidey.*] You told us, Mr. Fountain, that you were authorised by other unregistered dentists to come here?—Yes. I saw a good many of them, and told them I was coming up, and they said they were very pleased I was.
175. How many are there in Christchurch?—Practising on their own account?
176. I am referring to unregistered dentists?—Do you mean the ones who are practising for themselves, or those who are working for a dentist?
177. I take it that those who are practising on their own account are doing so contrary to the spirit of the Act?—The only men practising contrary to the Act would be those who were practising on their own account. Any dentist could employ any man to work in his workshop, or even do extracting.
178. How many are there practising on their own account?—I know of only four in Christchurch.
179. Have you any idea how many there are all over the colony?—I have not the slightest idea.
180. What suggestion do you make as regards the admission of these unregistered dentists?—Simply that a clause be put in whereby these unregistered men who have been practising for many years should be registered.
181. How many years' practice would you say?—I would leave that to yourselves. I have been practising on my own account for seven years, and my brother for twelve years. Some men, I think, have been practising two years. It would not be fair for me to say it should be five years—I would not be speaking for other men.
182. Do you think it is a fair thing?—I do.
183. Is it not unfair to those who have had to spend money in qualifying themselves?—No. I admit that a man who has passed an examination and is registered deserves more credit than a man who has not passed an examination, but I say that the Act as it stands now allows an unregistered man to practise, and if it allows him to practise why should he not do so.
184. Was it not the intention of the Act that every one who practised dentistry in this country should be registered?—I could not say. I should think that if it were so the House of Representatives would have brought it up in that way. Even at Home in England unregistered persons can practise so long as they do not imply that they are dentists.
185. Supposing all those who had been practising dentistry for five years in this colony and were unregistered were permitted to register, how many would it admit, taking the colony as a whole?—It might admit three or four.
186. I thought there were a good many more in your own place?—There are only two there who would be admitted under that. My brother has been practising for twelve years, as I have said, and I have been practising for seven. Then there is a man named Sayers, I think, who has been practising for only about two or perhaps three years. Then there is a new company called "The Painless Dental Company." It has been carrying on for only a very short time—perhaps not a year.
187. Supposing it were made three years, how many would that admit throughout the colony, so far as your knowledge goes? Are you aware of other conditions than those prevailing in your own town?—There is a London Dental Company; I do not know how long they have been in existence, and I do not know whether there are any unregistered men running the company. I