

4. If they were licensed to sell tobacco, would it not be more easy for the Labour Department to watch them?—It would not be much better, but we would ask for an amended Act in such a direction that they must close their shops if they sell tobacco. If there was a license we should like that too.

5. One could understand them being compelled to close; but, if they break the law now, one could imagine them breaking the law if they had a license?—Yes. On Wednesday afternoons they break the law. They partition the shop off, and on one side have fruit, and sell tobacco as a side line. They put a newspaper in front of it and say it is covered up, but that is not right. We ask that if they sell tobacco they must close their shops on Wednesday afternoons

R. J. SHAKES, Tobacconist, examined. (No. 14.)

*The Chairman:* Where is your business situate?

*Witness:* In Manners Street. At the present time we are labouring under a very unfair disadvantage on account of the larger number of people that are selling our goods. The goods we sell, and out of which we make our living, the people we complain of sell as a side line, and when our business is closed at 8 o'clock they continue to sell these goods. We know that restaurants, and hotels, and fruiterers, who are open after 8 o'clock, do a good trade in cigarettes, tobacco, and pipes. In fact, I know that in some hotels—I do not know that they keep tobacco—they have a stock of these goods. We do not wish them to stop selling the goods, but if we could get them to close their shops in the same way as we do that would get over the difficulty. Either they would have to close or not sell the goods. We do not want to have any monopoly, but only want to put them on the same footing as we are on at the present time.

W. GILBERT, Tobacconist, examined. (No. 15.)

*The Chairman:* Would you like to make a statement?

*Witness:* I would just like to say, Mr. Chairman, that this is a question which has been worrying us a good deal. I was instrumental, with another, in getting up a requisition which was signed by the tobacconists. We were in favour of closing at 8 o'clock, because before that we closed at 10 o'clock or 11 o'clock or at any time. We thought it would control the trade, but unfortunately it does not affect it while shopkeepers who are stocking our goods keep open. To get over that difficulty we induced the Minister of Labour to put a clause in the amending Bill making it a penal offence for people to sell after 8 o'clock; but that has had practically no effect. Although we have had prosecutions, we know that people have bought goods up to 10 o'clock, and I have seen them selling wholesale. It is a living with us, and with these other people it is only a side line, and we ask you to do something that will help us out of this difficulty. I believe you would do so if you thought it could be done. We do not know whether it could be done by registration, but we would like these people made to close their shops at the same time as the tobacconists. Whatever is done, we hope that we shall be placed in as fair a position as Chinamen or other people who are selling the goods. As far as the hotels are concerned, we know that most of them stock cigars, and we do not want to interfere with them to any extent. Some do not stock cigarettes, and I do not think their selling of tobacco amounts to very much; but there are some shops that sell tobacco and cigarettes and other lines, and I say we should be protected against those people after we have closed.

1. *Mr. Luke.*] Do you not think, Mr. Gilbert, it would be violating the principles of a considerable section of the public whose principles we have a right to safeguard as those of other people, if we close down the sale of tobacco absolutely, and leave the hotels open to sell tobacco and cigarettes? Will that not drive a large number of our young people into hotels who would not patronise them in any other way?—I should not like to do that. We recognise that in some hotels the young fellows often choose to take a cigar in the place of a drink. I think the hotels should not be restricted in the sale of cigars. If that could be done I believe it would practically do what we want. I think the hotelkeepers would do that, because I have spoken to one about the matter.

2. You think the hotels should be allowed to sell tobacco and cigars?—Cigars only.

3. *Mr. Poole.*] One of the witnesses stated that he knew of hotels where cigarettes, cigars, and pipes were being sold. I should like to ask if it is his opinion that the hotels which are taking that comprehensive view of the tobacconist business are not to all intents and purposes tobacconists?—I should say they are, but the trouble is that we want to get a definition of "tobacconist."

4. Do you not think, if pipes were being sold as well as tobacco and cigarettes, they would be tobacconists?—Taking pipes, you quite see that it is a fancy-goods line, because fancy-goods people sell them. It is not exclusively a tobacconists' line.

5. Subsection (8) of clause 25 of the Act says it shall not be lawful to sell cigars at any time if a shop is closed on requisition made under that section; so that you see that you have the protection of the law if we can get it into force?—The only way I can suggest is that the shops should have to close. The difficulty is that the Inspector cannot go round to every shop in any one night. He may get a few, but he cannot get a conviction. When a young man goes in to buy cigarettes, the men who are selling these side lines know the Inspector, and are very careful.

6. Do you know that the sympathy of the Legislature is with you?—Yes, but they do not go far enough. If these people are going to sell our goods after we close, then it is not fair to us.

WILLIAM DEVINE examined. (No. 16.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Where do you reside?—At Palmerston North.

2. What is your occupation?—I am an hotelkeeper and president of the Licensed Victuallers' Association.

3. And you represent the country associations here this morning?—Yes.

4. They have, of course, considered the Bill?—Yes.