

factory. Mr. Whitcombe tells me that he has five fireplaces in his shop, and has three or four gas-stoves going in the different offices, and he says the place is as cold as charity in the winter. He does not know how he can alter it. He pointed out that the question of the heating of shops was brought up by the City Council, and the Mayor went round with the Inspector of Factories. One of the places he went to was Mr. Whitcombe's factory. It happened to be a very nice warm winter's day. The Mayor went through the factory, and he said to Mr. Whitcombe, "Yours is one of the few factories that are nice and warm." Now, Mr. Whitcombe told me only last night that if the Mayor had come the next day he would have found that 10 ft. or 15 ft. from those stoves the place is as cold as ice. We feel that the employees should have some comfort; it is only right that they should work under proper conditions; but to say that we must make our shops hot enough to have the place comfortably warm—well, it is an impossibility. If the Inspector is to have power to order the thing to be done to his satisfaction we shall not know where we are. As long as what is only reasonable is asked for I think the retailers ought to do that, but it seems to us that if you say it must be to the satisfaction of the Inspector it is giving him very wide powers, and may be harmful to a lot of the employers. With regard to the closing of shops, the Bill provides that a quarter of an hour after closing-time is to be allowed for the purpose of serving customers. Now, with some of us it is not possible to finish up in a quarter of an hour. It is not possible, for instance, with a chemist. Frequently my shop is not empty till after 9.30 at night. There are no fresh customers coming in, but the assistants are working away as hard as they can go till half past 9 or later. We feel that there ought to be some provision made whereby, if we have to keep our men, we should pay overtime. We ought to have the right to get through our work without breaking the law. I do not for a moment suggest that we should be allowed to go on letting customers come in, but with me it is a common thing at 9 o'clock to have nine or ten prescriptions to dispense, and it is impossible to get through those in a quarter of an hour.

12. *Mr. Davey.*] Do you close the door at the proper time?—Yes. A quarter of an hour is not sufficient time for me to get through my work. There is another thing: If possible we would like to be allowed to give our assistants the option of working on the weekly half-holiday at the commencement of stocktaking for the one day. I know of one case where the commencement of the stocktaking fell on the weekly half-holiday. It would have saved an immense amount of work if the assistants could have simply gone and taken down the stock in the shop. The Inspector refused to allow it, though all the assistants were perfectly willing to go back. The Retailers' Association say that if they have to pay double or treble overtime for that one day it is worth their while to do it. It is only the one day that the assistants would be likely to be utilized for the purpose of taking down the stock in the shop, and if you can see your way to give employers the right to employ assistants even at double pay for that one afternoon it will be conferring a very great help on the retailers, and I do not think the assistants will be made to suffer. It can be made purely optional with them. I think that most assistants who have got the interests of their employers at heart would willingly come back that one day, knowing that it was only likely to happen once in the year, and they could have some other half-holiday. There is also the question of auctioneers. Auctioneers, most of them, do a very fair retail business, and yet they are exempted from closing. They have their sales on Saturday; they do not close, though they are selling retail, and they sell retail very largely. They do a large retail business. We think they should come in the same category as the retailer. We do not see any reason why auctioneers should be exempted. There are numbers of other points, but I know you have had them all put before you.

13. What about other exemptions: are they all right?—Yes.

14. *The Chairman.*] Dealing with that stocktaking question: there are many places, I understand, where they take stock twice a year?—That is not my experience. I do not know of any place that does.

15. *Mr. Davey.*] Clause 17 (c) provides that a chemist may reopen his shop on the statutory closing-day after the prescribed time of closing, "solely for the purpose of supplying medicines and surgical appliances which are urgently required: Provided that a chemist may keep his shop open and employ his assistants (but only for the purpose of supplying medicines and surgical appliances) between the hours of seven and nine o'clock in the evening of the statutory closing-day." Is there anything in your opinion difficult in that clause?—I know that it is being broken every day, and will be broken as long as it is on the statute-book. It is not possible for a chemist to keep his shop open only for the purposes mentioned. A man comes in and asks for a prescription to be made up, and then he says, "I want a tooth-brush." Hardly any chemist would refuse to supply him.

16. Do you think it would be possible to draw up a schedule of the goods that a chemist should be allowed to sell?—I do not. I think that the chemist ordinarily will sell anything in reason.

17. *Mr. J. Bollard.*] Chemists open now every day in the week. Sunday included, do they not—they open on Sunday for certain hours?—Yes.

18. Do you wish them to be prevented from doing that?—No, but I do not see any great reason why chemists should be exempt. I have looked up the business done on Christmas Day and Boxing Day for two or three years, and you would be astonished if I told you what a little amount of money we took on those two days and the few prescriptions we dispensed. In one case it was Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, and we did not close, and during those three days we hardly dispensed a prescription. Doctors carry medicine about with them, and it is very seldom we are roused up. I may say that Cook and Wallace for several years kept an assistant on the premises, but they gave it up. They found that it was only about once a fortnight he was wanted.