

19. How would you deal with people handling perishable goods: would you make them close on the Saturday?—No, I have not suggested that.

20. Would you exempt a retail butcher?—No.

21. You think he is not dealing in perishable goods?—The retail butchers of Christchurch thought they were going to be ruined when they had to close at 5 o'clock on a week-day and then at 7 o'clock on Saturday. The butchers in Christchurch tell me that their Saturday trade is almost nil now as compared with what it was. The people are getting their supplies on the Friday. It is winter-time, of course, now; I do not know how it will affect them in the summer. I am a firm believer in a half-holiday, and on the Saturday if possible.

22. *Mr. Veitch.*] Would you be in favour of a clause being inserted in this Bill providing for a universal Saturday half-holiday, and have done with it?—Yes, absolutely.

23. *The Chairman.*] You do not think there is any occasion for chemists' shops being open on Sunday?—Occasionally we are wanted, no doubt; but there is a lot of business done on Sunday that there is no need for.

THOMAS SMITH examined. (No. 29.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—Tobacconist and hairdresser, Christchurch.

2. Do you represent any association?—I represent the trade. I am secretary of the Tobacconists' Association in Christchurch, containing about fifty-five or fifty-seven members. I was deputed by the association to come here.

3. Have you your authority with you?—No. I have not got a written authority.

4. *Mr. Veitch.*] Is it an association for the whole of New Zealand?—No, purely a local association.

5. *The Chairman.*] You wish to give evidence on the Shops and Offices Bill?—Yes.

6. Will you make your statement, as briefly as possible, please?—We have a decided objection to our exemption being removed. We wish to be left in the same position as we are in under the present Act—that is, to be allowed the privilege of closing on either Thursday or Saturday. We reckon that it will be detrimental to our trade if we are compelled to close on Saturday. A number of people find it not only inconvenient but impossible to come in and get either a hair-cut or a shave if we are closed on Saturday afternoon. I know the feeling of my customers, and they are with me: they say it would be detrimental to our business if we were compelled to close on Saturday. And that is the general feeling in our trade in that city. Another point is this: whilst we at the present time are compelled to close on one half-day in the week and observe closing-hours at night-time, other shops are allowed to handle our goods *ad libitum* from early morning till any hour they choose at night. I refer now to billiard-rooms, railway book-stalls, confectioners, and other people. I visited a billiard-saloon last Saturday night, and I went to the proprietor and asked him if he stocked cigarettes and tobacco and cigars. He said, "Yes; do you want some?" I said, "No, but I want to find out if you sell any." He took me to a part of his billiard-saloon where he has a huge placard up on cardboard, "Tobacco, cigarettes, and cigars sold here." I asked if he sold many, and he said, "Yes, sometimes." "When do you observe the half-holiday?" I inquired. "I do not observe any at all," he said. I said, "But when do you cease selling these goods?" He replied, "When we close up the billiard-saloon at night-time." I said, "Do you mean to tell me that you do not close this department down at any particular time?" He said, "No." I said, "Do you not know that you are breaking the law?" "No," he said, "I don't, and I don't care." That is the thing that generally obtains with people who handle our goods apart from the legitimate tobacconists, and we maintain that it is unfair competition. We are compelled to observe certain hours, and we do not mind fair competition. We do not mind these people handling our goods if they are compelled to observe the same hours. We do not mind if everybody in the town handles our goods, provided they observe the same hours as we do. There is great objection taken to book-stalls—railway book-stalls in particular. They are open from early morning till late at night, and they not only sell tobacco, cigarettes, and cigars, but they advertise that the railway book-stall is open for the sale of cigars and tobacco and cigarettes on Thursday afternoons. They make a special feature of that—advertising to sell goods when we are compelled to close.

7. *Mr. Davey.*] Have you any knowledge, since the Saturday half-holiday came in in Christchurch, of, say, fruiterers at Sydenham or St. Albans, or anywhere round the district, stocking tobacconists' goods and therefore keeping open?—Complaint has been made to me that since the Saturday closing came into force people who are recognized as stationers and fancy-goods sellers have stocked tobacco and cigarettes, and have taken down their stationery signs and put up tobacconists' signs, and now they remain open on Saturday afternoons, presumably for the sale of tobacco, but I expect they cut in a bit with the stationery at the same time. As stationers they were compelled to close, but as tobacconists they are privileged to keep open.

8. Have you noticed any material reduction in your weekly takings since the Saturday half-holiday came in as compared with the previous year's?—For a few weeks it greatly affected us, but the last few weeks it has been righting itself.

9. *Mr. Hindmarsh.*] How would it do, do you think, to have the trades rigidly classified and every one carried on under a license—I do not mean a license to be paid for, but before a person could engage in any business he would have to get a license, and it would say on the license what he was allowed to sell?—I advocated myself two years ago here, when we were before Mr. Millar, the licensing of tobacconists throughout New Zealand.

10. Why not license every business?—I estimated that there were eight hundred legitimate tobacconists in New Zealand, and I personally was prepared to pay £10 a year license.