

deliberate; but the grocers always have the feeling that they are breaking the law, and they would like to get away from it, but they cannot do so under the present conditions. With regard to the question that was asked Mr. Main, I may say that I have had conversations with a good many of the suburban grocers, including grocers at Richmond, Papanui, and Sydenham, and a good many of these people who thought they were going to be ruined when the Saturday half-holiday was brought in now confess that they would not go back upon it.

2. *Mr. Hindmarsh.*] There is often a baseless lot of opposition to changes?—People think they are right, I suppose, at the time they oppose these reforms, but experience and adaptation prove that it was not so serious as they thought.

3. And adaptation does not take long to come about?—In this case it has taken a very short time.

HENRY WARDELL examined. (No. 38.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—A grocer at Wellington.

2. Representing whom?—I am not representing any association. There is only one thing that I wish to bring forward. I refer to clause 24, subclause (3), with regard to the requisition for closing. We would like the "particular trade" defined for the purpose of the requisition. I may mention that about two years ago in Wellington we got up a requisition, and we had a majority of the *bona fide* grocers' shops in Wellington; but there are very many small shops where a few groceries are kept as side lines—such as greengrocers and Chinamen—and they got up a counter-requisition and swamped ours. The suggestion we make is that "particular trade" should be defined as meaning the principal part of the business carried on by any person who signs the requisition.

3. It has been already ruled, I understand, that for the purposes of the requisition a man must state his principal trade?—I thought perhaps it would be well to make it more definite in the Act.

4. *Mr. Wilkinson.*] What is your opinion about the provincial holiday suggested by me this morning: would you favour the boundaries being enlarged to cover provinces instead of individual boroughs?—Yes, I think so.

5. And that two days—Thursday or Wednesday and Saturday—be submitted to the people?—In the Wairarapa, I think, they have Thursday for their holiday. Different towns seem to have different days. I think the three days could be put in.

6. The principle, at any rate, you agree with—the extension of the boundaries of the district?—Certainly. With regard to the Saturday half-holiday, I think the great difficulty and the great source of trouble in respect to all these compulsory holidays is that so many exemptions are granted. Trades are all allied to a certain extent. We sell goods that a pork-butcher sells, and he sells goods that we sell. There may be one or two trades that it is necessary should be open on a holiday, but I do not think there is any business that it is necessary to have open on Saturday if Saturday is the holiday. There may be a want for fruiterers and confectioners, and so on—people may want to buy goods of that description—but with regard to all provisions and eatables of that description I really cannot see why there should be any exemptions if Saturday afternoon is the holiday. I understand that in Sydney and other places where they have Saturday that is the great source of irritation—that there are so many exemptions in the Act.

7. Would you object to farmers and others outside the boroughs and towns voting upon this question? You see it concerns them?—It depends a good deal on circumstances. I should think that if a farmer comes in and gets his supplies in Wellington he has just as much right to vote on the closing-hours for Wellington as a resident in Wellington.

8. That would especially apply to country towns, where farmers come in extensively?—Yes.

9. Where towns depend solely, practically, upon the farming community?—Yes. And I think a provincial vote would do away with a lot of friction, because under the present law Wellington might close on Saturday and Hutt and Petone be open on that day.

10. *Mr. Okey.*] Having once agreed upon the half-holiday by taking a vote, would you favour that day remaining until a 10-per-cent. requisition is obtained, or taking a vote automatically every two years?—It would be better to have a requisition, because there may not be any necessity to take a vote. The requisition gives an indication of feeling. If there is dissatisfaction on one side or the other they have a right to get the requisition, if they can, and have a poll. If there is only a small section desiring a change they are not able to get sufficient signatures to the requisition for a poll.

11. *Mr. Rosser.*] Clause 5 commences in this way—"Subject to the provisions of this Act"; and then you will notice a few words have been inserted, namely, "and to any award of the Arbitration Court." Are you in favour of that being reinserted? It was in the Act before and was dropped in the amendment: are you in favour of reinserting it?—Yes. I do not see any use in having the Arbitration Act if the Arbitration Court has not got power to deal with hours and wages and every condition in the trade that is brought before it. The Act fixes certain hours and certain overtime rates, and the Arbitration Court has no authority to deal with those—at least, it has authority to reduce the hours, but has no authority to extend them. The Court, however, has authority to fix the wages, and every trade is different. The grocery trade is carried on under quite different conditions from the drapery trade; what suits the drapery trade would not suit the grocery. The members of the Arbitration Court are expert at this work, and go into every detail of the trade in a way that the House of Representatives could not possibly do. I think that the Arbitration Court, if it is to have any control of the conditions of a trade, should have entire control.