

C. DALTON examined. (No. 5.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Your full name, Mr. Dalton?—Cyril Harley Dalton.
2. You are a shopkeeper in Auckland?—Yes, clothing and mercery.
3. It is not, of course, necessary, for you to go over the same ground as Mr. Tutt. You can, if you like, simply endorse what he has said?—I wish to endorse the evidence already given by Mr. Tutt, and am prepared to answer any questions.
4. *Mr. Davey.*] How long has this large shop to which the previous witness referred been closed on the Saturday?—Eight weeks.
5. Did they close before the poll was taken?—No.
6. Did none of the large shops close on Saturday before?—Yes, about five or six in Queen Street.
7. The firm you mention only closed as a result of the poll?—Yes.
8. *Mr. Glover.*] The previous witness has stated that some serious losses have taken place in consequence of the Saturday closing. Can you inform the Committee how far it has detrimentally affected your own business so far as your weekly expenses and takings are concerned? Would you kindly intimate to the Committee the loss, if any, that has occurred to you?—My business has gone down £30 or £40 a week.
9. That is, your turnover?—Yes. My takings used to be about £100 a week, and the Saturday takings were by far the most important. From Monday to Friday I usually took £50, and then another £50 the next day. It is purely a working-class trade, and we find that the people do not have the money until Saturday; and when they get their money on Saturday they have no chance to do their shopping. Last Friday night a woman came into my shop and said she had had to borrow a sovereign from her next-door neighbour, as her husband did not get paid till the Saturday. They are the people that feel the inconvenience of the Saturday closing. It is all right for the well-to-do people who shop in Queen Street, but many of the working people have to rely upon the money they get on the Saturday.
10. Could you inform the Committee of any other cases in which losses have occurred?—I will give you one instance of a shopkeeper in Newton who had to place his affairs before a meeting of creditors about three months ago, but his sister came to the rescue and accommodated the creditors to the extent of 15s. in the pound. I will give you his figures: During the eight weeks of June and July in 1912 his takings were £312 2s. 8d., while in June and July of this year his takings were only £155 9s. 6d.—just about half. The annual rental of that shop is £260, and the annual rates £30. How is that man going to get along now, when he had to make an arrangement with his creditors when he was taking £312 in those eight weeks last year?
11. He is reduced to half his takings?—Yes, but his rent is the same, and his rates are the same. He cannot get any reduction, and he has a lease.
12. Have you any more instances?—Yes, I can give you the case of another man, opposite me in Newton, who is a shopkeeper supplying ladies' costumes, blouses, and women's apparel. The man who had the business previously started it about four years ago, but he made a fortune out of it.
13. What was his name?—His name was Campbell. A Mr. Dyer has taken over the business. For the eight weeks in June and July of 1912 the takings were £572 17s. 3d., and for the eight weeks in June and July of 1913 the takings were £324 3s. 10d. You will notice the difference from £572 to £324. That man's wages, rent, and other expenses amount to £25 a week. He is a manufacturer as well. He manufactures the goods on the premises. The week before last he took £21 for the whole week.
14. *The Chairman.*] There has never been very much of this retail trade done in Queen Street on Saturday afternoons?—No. On Saturday afternoons the people get out into the suburbs.
15. It is principally done in Symonds Street?—Yes, Symonds Street and Karangahape Road.
16. And the Saturday half-holiday closing had been very detrimental to these streets?—Yes, that is so. My next-door neighbour in Newton also has a shop in Queen Street. He has gone down considerably in his takings in Newton, and his Queen Street trade has increased a little, because the factory workers and the public there now do their shopping more in their lunch-hour in Queen Street. They cannot get away into the suburbs to do it.
17. *Hon. Mr. Massey.*] What has been the effect of this compulsory Saturday half-holiday from the employees point of view? I am speaking of the employees in the shops. Has there been any reduction in the number of employees?—Yes, there has been a great reduction. In my own place I employed three hands. I have dismissed one, and I expect another one will have to go. I suppose there are thirty or forty out at the present time, and they are very unfortunate because they cannot go to another shop and get on.
18. You are speaking of people employed in Karangahape Road and Newton generally?—Yes, I know one shop where three of the hands have been put off.
19. *Hon. Mr. Millar.*] Your argument is that the purchasing-power of the Auckland people is reduced owing to the Saturday half-holiday?—Yes.
20. In what way?—I mean so far as the small shops are concerned. I suppose there is more money goes into amusements or hotels—except that which goes to Queen Street during the week.
21. Your argument is that because Saturday is the half-holiday the people are not purchasing what they require?—I would not say that, but the money is not coming to the small shopkeepers.
22. Do you not think the people have a right to fix their holidays?—I think the shopkeepers should be allowed to have the half-holiday on the day which is best suited for their business.
23. Who keeps the shopkeepers?—The public.
24. Have not the public a right to say on what day the holiday shall be?—If you come to consider it out you will find that it is only the "sports" which are really at the back of the whole thing.