

would like to say, on behalf of the pork-butchers of Auckland, that that clause is most desirable and should be allowed to remain there. There has been a great deal of the most serious trouble caused to the pork-butchers of Auckland by coercion that has been brought about by the large butchering firms in Auckland trying to squeeze the pork-butchers out of existence, inasmuch as they make use of the arbitration laws to drag us in on every occasion when opportunity occurs. There are a number of pork-butchers in Auckland where the shop is run by the proprietor and probably his wife, and they have to work long hours and are just making a living, and it is very annoying to them to have from time to time to go along and defend themselves from this coercion on the part of the butchers. There is a large firm in Auckland that is apparently trying to create a monopoly. This sort of thing has been our trouble all along, and I would like to see this made law, as it would free us from this coercion. That is all I have to say.

5. *Mr. Davey.*] I understand that you are running a small-goods trade?—Yes.

6. Do I understand that your takings have practically dropped through the Saturday half-holiday by over £200 at your main shop?—That is a fact. The figures are taken from my books.

7. That is dealing absolutely with the necessities of life?—No, not the necessities. Our trade is generally looked upon as providing the luxuries.

8. Pork sausages, bacon and ham, and suchlike?—Yes.

9. I do not understand why there should be such a vast difference in the amount of money spent. I assume that they spend it somewhere else?—That is what I say. It is going into other channels. It goes largely, I believe, into the picture-shows, and more is diverted to the larger stores and to the hotels. There is no doubt about it.

10. Do you think more money is spent at the hotels and picture-shows than there was before?—Certainly. I am sure of it—as regards picture-shows, at any rate.

11. You do not think, then, that this may mean greater thrift on the part of the people?—No, certainly not. Quite the opposite, in fact.

12. *Hon. Mr. Millar.*] You mean to imply that the money has simply been transferred from pork sausages, &c., to picture-shows. Do you not think the people have a right to spend their money as they please?—Certainly the people have a right to do what they like with their money; but it is not right that the shopkeepers should be ruined and cut out of their livelihood.

13. You think they have a right to do what they like with their money?—Most decidedly they have. I am simply depending my own interests and the interests of the other shopkeepers. But I can say this, that it is coming back on to the workers.

14. *Mr. Atmore.*] Have you any idea as to what would be the probable cost of a second poll?—No.

15. Would the petitioning shopkeepers be willing to bear the cost of a second poll?—Well, if it was put before them I have no doubt they would. I myself would be quite willing to bear my proportion of it, I can assure you.

16. *The Chairman.*] Your contention is, Mr. Coates, that the Saturday half-holiday is equally disastrous to the exempted shopkeepers as it is to those whose shops have been closed?—Yes, I am positive of it.

17. It has been alleged that the money is going to the large shopkeepers?—Yes, that is so.

18. Well, I think Auckland people at any rate recognize that you are the largest shopkeeper in your particular business?—Yes, that is so.

19. Well, how do you account for the loss of trade in your case?—We do not deliver goods. Our trade is purely a cash trade. The people have to come to us for what they get.

20. You think it is quite likely that the people, not being able to spend their money at the shops, spend it in other directions in extravagance?—That is quite likely. We all know it is very hard for the general public to keep money in their pockets.

21. *Mr. Anderson.*] You knew, of course, that this poll was to take place. Did you take any steps in connection with it?—No, I must admit myself that I did not, beyond recording my own vote. I had no idea that it would ever be carried at all.

22. You have got a small shopkeepers' union?—No.

23. They took absolutely no interest in it?—No.

24. They were minding their own business?—Yes.

25. And now you find that because you did not take interest in it it has affected you?—Yes.

26. You are asking Parliament now to make a special law to get you out of the difficulty that you have got into yourself?—Some one else has got us into the difficulty. One cannot be always following up politics, and arbitration awards, and laws, and suchlike.

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JAMES SAMUEL DICKSON, M.P., examined. (No. 7.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You would like to give evidence, Mr. Dickson?—Yes, in support of the petition. I may say that I have been connected with business matters in Queen Street, Auckland, for the last twenty-five years, and, of course, I can only speak on account of the half-holiday as regards the shopkeepers in Queen Street. These other gentlemen, I believe, are representing the suburbs. I may say that the Saturday closing has very seriously affected the trade of the shopkeepers in Queen Street; at any rate, in my line of business it has done so—that is to say, general clothing and mercery. We find that now the Saturday half-holiday has come in that the adjacent larger shops are opening out and securing a good deal of the trade which used to come to us. My experience in the past has been that when any public holiday came during the week, of course the large shops used to open up on Saturday night, and then we did not do anything like our ordinary Saturday night's trade. We now have to close when the larger shops are closed, and consequently they get a good deal of the trade which would otherwise come to us.