

That is really the position so far as Queen Street is concerned, and I am quite satisfied that this Saturday closing will drive the trade to the larger shops, and I know it will have a most fatal result so far as the finances of the smaller shopkeepers are concerned: they cannot afford to pay the rents and keep going on under the present conditions. Why we would like a fresh poll taken is this: The law was a little bit faulty, in the first place, in regard to Road Boards. It only applied to boroughs, but, unfortunately, we have the Eden Terrace Road Board district right in the heart of the City of Auckland; and the shopkeepers in that Road Board district are allowed to keep open, while the shopkeepers in the Borough of Mount Albert and the Borough of Mount Eden further on have to close. There was one particular shopkeeper in that district who had a large grain-store on one side of the street and a big grocery-shop on the other, which came under the Saturday closing. The grain-store was in Eden Terrace and was exempt, and the grocery-shop was in the City of Auckland. And the consequence was that when this Saturday closing came into force he simply changed the grocery-shop over to the grain-store, and put the grain-store in the City of Auckland. So that now he has a right to keep open, and is naturally doing a roaring business. Go a little further down and you come to Page's store. They have to close because they are in the Mount Albert Borough—

2. *Hon. Mr. Massey.*] Is Page's store in Mount Albert Borough?—Yes, and consequently they have to close. That is why we would like to see Eden Terrace brought in. I consider that any Road Board such as Eden Terrace should be brought in just the same as a borough. Why we ask for another poll is on account of Devonport and Takapuna being brought in on account of Takapuna, which was part of the Waitemata County Council, being formed into a borough. It links up the North Shore. I may say that it went across the water from Ponsonby to Birkenhead. The old Act provides that it should be within a mile of the city boundary. Going across from Ponsonby to Birkenhead it is just on to the mile, though from Queen Street Wharf to the North Shore it is just a shade over the mile. The consequence is that the small boroughs of Birkenhead and Northcote have to close. Through Takapuna coming in as a new borough it brings in all the North Shore now.

3. *The Chairman.*] Takapuna is between Birkenhead and Devonport, and so links them up?—Yes; they have to close.

4. That extends eight miles from Auckland?—Practically. But the old Act provides that you can go up to fifty or a hundred miles so long as there is only one mile between each borough. The position is this with regard to Devonport and Takapuna: they did not have a vote taken, and yet later they are put in. We consider it is only right and fair that, the area having been so enlarged and all these districts taken in, legislation should be brought down to allow a fresh poll to be taken over the whole area, as the number of residents in these particular localities practically amount to the number of people that cast their vote on the day when the poll was taken. That is really the position. Then, in the event of the poll being taken, and it being declared in favour of Saturday again, the shopkeepers, of course, will have to abide by it. But in that case we want to impress upon you that we would like you to do away with the exemptions under the Act.

5. *Hon. Mr. Massey.*] What exemptions are you thinking of?—Well, I may say that the Saturday night before I came down here I went to Newmarket, in my own electorate, and I went into a baker's shop there to see what I could buy. I asked for some biscuits. He said, "Yes, I have a large supply of biscuits—all the different kinds of biscuits." I bought some biscuits, and I then went along to a fish-shop a little further along the road in Newmarket, and I got all sorts of pickles. Then I went into a pork-butcher's shop and got some other things there. I maintain that there ought to be a clause put in the Bill so that if such shops as fish-shops are exempt they should only be exempt on condition that they sell nothing but fish. That is really what we want to get.

6. *Mr. Davey.*] That is the law now, is it not?—No, it is not. Another serious thing is that under the old Act a Chinaman can keep open if he is not naturalized. We do not want that sort of thing to exist any longer. I can honestly endorse what the other gentlemen have said in regard to returns. The returns are falling off all round. The reason for that is this: the small shopkeepers had a certain amount of trade on account of the larger shops being closed. If those larger shops had been open on the Saturday nights we would not have done the trade that we did; and consequently the smaller shops have now lost this advantage. I am speaking from a Queen Street point of view. The consequence is we lose this trade, and then we have to compete against these other people when we are open.

7. *Mr. Atmore.*] You think the shopkeepers would be willing to pay the cost of another poll?—I think so. I may say that the Mayor of Auckland is in Wellington at the present time. I have laid the matter before him, and he sees the injustice of the thing, and he says he will do everything possible to assist us if we get a new poll. He says that he does not think that any of the local bodies would object to the cost of the poll. The cost of the poll would probably be about £120.

8. What, right through?—Yes. The rolls are made up. It is only a matter of advertising and the poll-clerks; it would not run into more than £120. If there was any objection from the local bodies to provide the money I am quite satisfied the shopkeepers would make it up. The amount would be very small when divided up among the local bodies.

9. *Hon. Mr. Millar.*] Have these fifteen thousand persons who have signed the petition asked for a poll?—They have asked for a poll, and to do away with the exemptions.

*The Chairman* then instructed the clerk to read the petition, which was done accordingly.

10. *Hon. Mr. Millar.*] There is no mention about a poll?—Of course there is. The petition asks that we revert back to the old system. The old system provided for a poll.