

J. W. COLEMAN examined. (No. 9.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Your full name?—Jonathan William Coleman, tobacconist and hairdresser, Auckland.

2. You wish to give evidence on the Shops and Offices Bill?—Yes.

3. Will you make a statement?—We see by the new Bill that tobacconists are not exempted as in the past. In the past tobacconists have been partly exempted, and that suited our trade very well. We have been working under it from the time the present Act came into force. Of course, what we really want is total exemption, similar to the hotels and restaurants. The hotels and restaurants to-day sell tobacco and cigars and cigarettes, and we would like to be put on the same footing as they are. It is hardly fair that they should be allowed to sell from 6 to 12 at night, as some of them do. Failing total exemption we would like to be allowed to remain as we are at present. We are working under a requisition. Our requisition has been in force now for about five years, and we find it to work first-class for all parties. It came into force on the 9th April, 1908, and that is what we have found most suitable for the tobacconists' trade and the hairdressers. If we have to close on Saturday afternoons the tobacconists and hairdressers will have a very bad time of it throughout the city, the suburbs, and the extended suburbs. I also see by the proposed Bill that our hours have been reduced from 9 o'clock as in the past until 8. That is a shortening of five hours a week for us. Of course, this shortening of hours is raising our rent all the time. Our landlords do not reduce our rent, but Parliament reduces our hours. I think that is all I have to say on the matter. Here are the requisitions, the hairdressers' requisition and the tobacconists' requisition. [Exhibits put in.] These requisitions were decided upon at a large meeting of both trades, and the result has been that working under these requisitions has been found very satisfactory. Of course, the trade operates differently in different centres. Our trade is quite different from that of Wellington or Christchurch. We have only got the one main street practically, then the suburbs, and the extended suburbs.

4. The petition which has been presented to us asks that there should be no exemptions at all—that tobacconists, hairdressers, hotels, and everybody should close on the same day?—We did not come here with the idea of closing up anybody. We came here to ask to be allowed to carry on our business as we have been doing under our requisition. Every trade knows what suits their business best. I do not know what suits drapers or hotelkeepers, but I know what suits our trade, and that is what I am speaking about.

5. Do you not think that the people who require tobacco and cigarettes, &c., could get them on the Friday night?—The position is this: we have a fair amount of outside trade, men working at Otahuhu and such outside places where there are large works. They would not come into town on a Friday night. Again, the casual smoker would not come into town on the Friday night as he does now on the Saturday just to get his tobacco. When he passes the shop on the Saturday night and thinks he would like a smoke he will go in and get it. The casual smoker means a very large proportion of the business. The regular smoker very often gets his tobacco from the stores. As a rule he smokes plug tobacco.

6. *Mr. Okey.*] What is your business?—Hairdresser and tobacconist. Our real business starts at 5 o'clock and lasts till 9 at night.

7. It would mean you would lose a good deal by closing from 8 to 9?—Yes.

8. *Hon. Mr. Massey.*] What you want, I think, Mr. Coleman, is that, in the event of Saturday being chosen as the half-holiday, you should, if so inclined, take another day instead of Saturday?—That is so.

9. Do I understand you to say that at present you are allowed to keep open on Saturday?—Yes. There is another matter I have forgotten. During December and January our requisition states that we can close at 10 o'clock. We have found that very useful for our business. During December and January there is generally a fair number of people in town, and there is a good deal of business to be done in that extra hour during those two months. I think if some of you gentlemen were tobacconists, as we are, you would say the same as we do, and you would drop the proposed Bill as quickly as you would drop anything.

10. You mean the provision that affects you?—Yes. What we really want is our requisition. We have found it work well in the past.

11. It studies the public?—Yes, it has studied them in the past. We have never had any complaints, and in the event of the Saturday half-holiday being decided upon we certainly want to be exempt. I think the Labour Department will bear me out when I say that there has been very little trouble under the Act, so far as our trade is concerned, in Auckland.

H. BOLITHO examined. (No. 10.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Your name?—Henry Bolitho.

2. Occupation and address?—Tobacconist and hairdresser, Auckland.

3. Will you make a statement?—Yes. The first thing I would like to bring under your attention is with respect to clause 2. This clause reads as follows: "'Hotel' means any premises in respect of which a publican's license is granted under the Licensing Act, 1908, and includes a private hotel and a private boardinghouse in which three or more persons (other than the occupier and the members of his family) are ordinarily employed; and 'restaurant' means any premises (other than a hotel) in which meals are provided and sold to the general public for consumption on the premises, and whether or not lodging is provided for hire for the accommodation of persons who desire to lodge therein, and includes a tea-room and an oyster-saloon." I would like to know what that really covers. You will note that towards the end of the clause it states "and whether or not lodging is provided for hire for the accommodation of persons who desire to lodge therein." I would like to know what that covers. Does it cover hotels, or restaurants, or both of them?