

that you are reinserting it, it is questionable whether we will ever get the question of hours back into the award. I have a complaint that the drivers at Hellaby's, Auckland, do not get a meal till 10 or 11. I hardly think it is right and proper that a man should have to wait so long. It is not so bad in the case of a man, but very often boys have to wait long hours for breakfast. It is simply through disorganization and want of system that this sort of thing is allowed to occur. I have been in the butchering trade for twenty-five years, and know something of its working when I make that remark. Now, as regards Christmas and New Year's Eve, the Act specifies that the shops can be kept open until 11 p.m. The union thinks it is necessary to put a limit on these hours. Ordinary shops do not open until 8 a.m. Butchers on these days start at the usual time, 6 a.m.; very probably, owing to the rush, it may be earlier. If they are going to work till 11 p.m., even giving the Christmas holidays in, it is too long for any man to work, and is not necessary with proper organization. Butchering business is done in the morning—that is the time when people do their meat-buying; and even if other establishments keep open it is not necessary for the butchers to keep open. At the commencement of 1912 the butchers voluntarily closed their establishments at 6 p.m. on Saturday. No one butcher in Auckland would go back to the old system of keeping open till 9. That speaks for itself that Saturday-night trade, as far as the butcher is concerned, is not required. The unfortunate part of it is that several of the butchers are keeping their men too long a time clearing up. There is a paragraph here which I do not think sufficiently explicit. I refer to clause 8, subsection (2): "The provisions of the last preceding subsection relating to the hours of employment shall not apply to any shop-assistant while engaged in delivering goods at the residence of any person situate four miles or upwards from the shop, and not being within three miles of any borough or within any area in which an award of the Court of Arbitration is in force." Now, there is an award of the Court of Arbitration operating in Auckland which only relates to wages. This clause presumably means hours. It does not say so. I have had some rather forcible experiences lately in respect of interpretations, especially by the Court of Arbitration, though I suppose the Judge would not be asked for an interpretation of an Act the same as he is of an award. If the Judge had the interpreting of that clause he would simply say an award was in force in Auckland, but it does not refer to hours—only wages. The Act provides that every shop shall be registered with the Inspector in the name of the occupier. In Auckland we have about forty branch shops, and in every case the first shopman is registered as the occupier. That registration practically excludes the first shopman from the benefit of the Act. He seldom gets more than the minimum, £3 10s., except in one or two cases. Now, there is a provision in the Act which provides that overtime shall not be paid to men in receipt of over £200 a year. These men are not getting that, and my union thinks they should not be deprived of the benefits regarding hours to which they are entitled under the Shops and Offices Act. They have a certain amount of responsibility, but they are simply shop-assistants—working-men; but by this system of registration they are deprived of the benefits of this Act. There is one other matter in connection with hours, and that is the Wednesday hours. If you read the hours as provided by the Act the inference is that on Wednesday they shall work five hours. The present Act and the proposed amending Act do not state that definitely, but practically leave nine working-hours before 1 p.m. In Auckland the butchers start at 6 a.m. at present. They close at 12, but frequently some of the employers keep them there till 1. They are not evading the law so long as they do not exceed the number of hours to be worked in each week. I suggest that the hours for the half-holiday should not exceed four and a half or five hours on the half-day, otherwise it is not a half-holiday at all. Clause 9 (a) of the new Act says, "The shop-assistant shall not be employed in or about the shop at meal-times or during the interval for rest or refreshment." At the present time an order-man doing his rounds has to get his meals while on his rounds, and what I am doubtful about is whether the man gets his meals at all. There is another clause which says, "All work done for the occupier of the shop by the assistant elsewhere than in the shop (whether the work is or is not in connection with the business of the shop) shall be deemed to be done while the shop-assistant is in the shop, and the time shall be counted accordingly." Well, the question is, is the time the man is out on the cart to be counted as a meal-time or in the work of his employer? It would be better if a more explicit clause were made in order that we could determine what the position was. In the proposed Act there are several exemptions where the Saturday half-holiday is carried. My instructions are to ask you that in cases where the poll is carried by the whole of the electors the butchers should be included in the general holiday. I am speaking from experience when I say that there is no reason why this could not be done if the electors understand there are to be no exemptions when they vote. The butcher's trade is a morning trade, more so on Saturday than on any other day. In Auckland nine-tenths of the trading is done on Saturday morning. I can give you an instance. I know of one shop which has a cash trade. It takes £17 before 12.30 and £4 afterwards. I know of another case in which the total cash takings are £40, and £33 is taken before 12.30. These figures speak for themselves. On the first Saturday of the Saturday half-holiday in Auckland there was absolutely nothing done in the afternoon. People thought the shops were shut. Now a few stragglers come. If you kept open until midnight somebody would come along. I hope the Committee will see its way to include butchers, even if they cannot include pork-butchers. There is a difficulty here because of the Saturday night cash trade, and that is a difficulty to be overcome. In reference to clause 43, "If any shop-assistant is employed in any work in any shop or in connection with the business of any shop later than fifteen minutes after the prescribed time, the employer commits an offence in respect of each shop-assistant so employed": In the first place, my union objects to it altogether. The Act provides for nine hours' work. Either this clause should be struck out altogether or the extra quarter of an hour added to the day's work. Why cannot the employer close his shop a quarter of an hour earlier, or detail some of his hands to