

44. You say that working-men's wives seldom shop after 1 o'clock on Saturdays. Do you know how hard it is for women with two or three children and their household duties to get out to do their shopping in the morning?—The butcher goes for orders, and the grocer goes for orders.

45. You have already stated that the women do better business by going to the shops?—Most shops have a very quiet time on Saturday afternoons; Saturday evening is the time.

46. Is it not a fact that Hellaby's provide meals for their employees?—They did, but they have not for four years. They had a cook there and the men had to pay for their meals. A fire burnt down the place, and I suppose they did not think it worth while to continue.

47. *To Mr. Prior.*] Prior to the present Act we were working upon an award mutually agreed upon, fifty-six hours a week. The starting-time was 6 a.m. The closing-time on four days of the week was 5 p.m., 1 p.m. on the half-holiday, and 9 p.m. on Saturday. Under the Act they only had to work fifty-two hours a week.

48. Does it not all point to this: that you can get better terms under an award than under an Act of Parliament?—We have never put our case before a parliamentary Committee before. We have usually been content to go to a Court.

49. Then this is what you are asking the Committee: that they will give you the advantages and shelter of an Act of Parliament and land the disadvantages upon the employers?—What are the disadvantages?

50. Is it not a disadvantage for employers to have only fifty-two hours?—No, it is not. It does not turn out disadvantageous under the scheme as they work it.

51. The advantages are the looseness of the Act which provides fifty-two hours a week, a record to be kept of all hours worked, a limited number of hours per day, and penalties?—We had all that under the award.

52. You had not under the award the conditions laid down here?—Better conditions.

53. And now because you have lost some of the conditions you want to pick the eyes out of the award and the eyes out of what is in the Act?—I have asked to get conditions in the Act that we can work under.

54. It comes to this: you prefer Arbitration Court conditions to Act conditions?—Yes.

55. We agree to that; we say it was better regulated under arbitration?—It is no use going back to the Arbitration Act. They have already turned us out, and we turn our attention to the statute; and up to the Act interfering, for thirteen years the employers and workers settled their differences. The Act came in and upset the whole of the conditions, and we are here now to take advantage of the Act.

56. With regard to the meal-hour for the men on the order-cart, do you suggest that the man should leave his horse and cart and go some distance away to get his breakfast?—I say that the breakfast-hour should be provided under the Act where a man has to start early. Fancy a boy being kept until midday for his breakfast!

57. You describe yourself as a practical butcher. Would it be possible for a man to go back to the shop four or five miles away?—Generally speaking, in the shops the hands get their breakfast-time. On their rounds the carters have to wait till 10 o'clock very frequently. A general complaint is that they cannot get their proper meal-hours. Carters start their meals any time after half past 7; go as much as five miles out—a couple of miles at least. In Auckland labour is so cheap you will see four or five carts of one firm in the same street. If they were to organize they would do considerably better than they are doing under this Act. The employer can waste everything because labour is so cheap and the hours so long.

58. You spoke about Gisborne closing at half past 5. Do you know that it was objected to by the employers? Do you know that the majority of those who agreed to it did not understand that it applied to Saturday?—I know all about that.

59. It was brought up in a technicality, and the dispute arose because the employers were under the impression that they did not close on Saturday?—Owing to a difference of opinion over one firm, that is all. They close at 6 in Auckland and Waihi. There is no reason why it should not be done everywhere.

*Mr. Hindmarsh:* This has been voluntary, I understand, and attended by good results.

*Mr. Prior:* That is not the experience in Gisborne.

*Witness:* I know what took place at Gisborne.

SATURDAY, 16TH AUGUST, 1913.

JOHN NEIL McLEAN examined. (No. 15.)

1. *To Mr. Pryor.*] I am a boardinghouse-keeper at Rotorua, and, with Mr. Pearce, represent the Rotorua Boardinghouse-keepers' Association to oppose the Bill. There are twenty-four or twenty-five houses at Rotorua. In the summer we employ about one hundred and seventy hands and in the winter about a hundred. Under normal conditions we accommodate eleven hundred guests, and in the busy seasons an extra four hundred or so. In Rotorua the boardinghouses have been working under an arbitration award for three years; our present award came into force on the 18th November of last year, and remains in operation for three years. That award contains some special provisions to suit the peculiar requirements of Rotorua to meet a tourist business, under which the conditions vary to a considerable extent. For about five months there is a rush, and in the slack season not 25 per cent. of the business is done. Yet we have to keep a considerable nucleus of a good staff in the slack season, because, even in the winter, we have a short rush occasionally. Sixty-five hours a week are provided for in the award, as against sixty-two and fifty-eight proposed in this Bill. If the Act comes into force our award comes to a close. At the time the first award was made the union representatives brought the case, and