

ANDREW PARLANE examined. (No. 48.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Give us your full name and whom you represent?—My name is Andrew Parlane. I am secretary of the Drivers' Union in Wellington, and am giving evidence on behalf of our union. The class of drivers particularly affected by this Act are the bread and coal carters. The first thing we ask is that the Act shall come into force on the 1st January instead of the 1st April. Previous to October of last year the hours of these drivers were governed by an award of the Arbitration Court, which fixed their hours at forty-seven and a half, exclusive of stable attendance, which would amount to about an hour a day. Under the Shops and Offices Act their hours are fifty-two per week, with an hour per day extra for stable attendance. There is very great dissatisfaction among the men.

2. You say their hours have been increased under this Bill?—Yes, they were forty-seven hours and a half under the award. They are not paid for the hour a day. We submit that the new Act should come into force with as little delay as possible, and we ask that the Committee will endeavour to have the Bill brought into force on the 1st January, as we consider the matter to be one of urgency. Section 4, paragraph (d), dealing with the records: We ask that wages shall be shown separate from premiums, bonuses, or commissions. Our reason for asking for this is that we think any commissions, bonuses, or premiums should be paid over and above the minimum wage. With regard to keeping the records, the fact of an employee signing a record should not, in our opinion, be proof of its correctness. It does not seem fair to us that because an employee is compelled to sign a record his signature should be deemed proof of the correctness of the record—that his signature should make an incorrect record correct. Section 5, clause (1) (b), relative to closing on a half-holiday: We ask that the time for closing shall be noon instead of 1 o'clock. Drivers have to do a certain amount of stable-work after the hours prescribed by the Act. If the Committee do not see their way clear to grant this we ask that it be specified in the case of drivers that all work shall cease at 1 o'clock, so that the men will have the time before that hour for the necessary stable attendance. We prefer noon, but if 1 o'clock is to be retained we ask that the whole of the work, including attendance to horses, should cease at 1 o'clock.

3. Would they come back in the evening to attend to the horses?—Yes; that is another argument why they should get off at 1. The employee, in addition to working up till 1 o'clock, has to come back in the evening, and perhaps Sunday morning as well. Now, at present the employer can keep his drivers hanging about for eighteen hours and a half a day. A shop-assistant under the schedule which provides for bakers can be worked from 4 in the morning to half past 10 for five days in the week, and to 11 on the other day, and it averages about eighteen hours and a half a day. Of course, they cannot work continuously more than nine hours, but they can work them intermittently. We ask that the hours shall be fixed by the employer in advance, and that notice of such regulation shall be posted up in each shop and stable, and shall not be altered without fourteen days' notice. The drivers have entered into two agreements with the master bakers of Wellington. In the first agreement (to be found in Vol. iii, Book of Awards, page 212) it is provided that fifty-five hours shall be worked inclusive of everything, and the starting-time was fixed at 8 in the morning. That ran for three years, and was then superseded by an award which provided that the hours should be regulated by the employer to suit the requirements of his business. This meant that the hours had to be fixed by the employer in advance. Later on we entered into another agreement with the master bakers, and this clause taken from the award was accepted by the master bakers. This further agreement is to be found in Vol. ix, Book of Awards, page 605. At the present time a man will come down to attend to his horses, but when he has done the horses he is stood off till the bread is ready. If he has done the stable-work and is ready to go on with the other work the employer should not be able to stand him off. If the bread does not rise the bakers have to be paid, and we do not see why an exception should be made in the case of the carter. We ask that the hours should be fixed in advance, and that such regulation shall be posted up in the shop and stable, and not be altered without fourteen days' notice. Section 11: We ask that the wages shall be paid weekly. There is another week's grace given before prosecution, which means that a man can be kept out of his wages for three weeks, and these men cannot afford to be kept out of their wages for three weeks.

4. Is there any attempt made to pay fortnightly?—No, I do not know of any. Section 18 (a) (c): We ask that these be struck out. They deal with holidays. On both the occasions I have referred to—that master bakers entered into agreements with the Wellington drivers—provision was made for a half-holiday even though a special holiday fell during a particular week. This section is really doing a man out of a half-holiday. At the present time the ordinary carters get the full benefit of a holiday and do not work on Saturday afternoon to make it up. In regard to sanitation, we ask that an amendment be put in providing that where an occupier of a shop engaged in manufacture, handling or delivery of bread, meat, milk, or other articles of human consumption requires his assistants to do any stable or other dirty work he shall provide proper lavatory accommodation, to include a supply of hot water, soap, towels, &c., so that the assistant can properly wash himself before handling such articles. At present a bread-carter has to go and clean out a stable and wash the heels of greasy-legged horses, and there are no provisions other than a cold-water tap to wash himself before handling bread, and I think that in every baker's shop proper provision should be made that the men should clean themselves.

5. Would you have a compulsory clause?—I am quite prepared to say that there should be. Section 43, relating to fifteen minutes' grace: If there were any provision that overtime is to be paid for this I have no objection. It means increasing the already long hours of drivers. If it is intended to pay overtime for this I have no objection, but otherwise we strongly object