

I realize that there is a body of opinion in Swan Hill in favour of the Saturday afternoon holiday. Some of these people consider that it would improve the quality of sport and promote more sporting activities. The Ministers' Fraternal has expressed the opinion that if Saturday were retained as the half-holiday there would be no organized sport on Sundays, such as bicycle races and swimming races which have been held in the town on Sunday. I agree that organized sport is undesirable on Sundays, but I suppose that if all the week were a holiday some people would still organize sport on the Sunday. I consider that it would be a disadvantage to the large majority of people living around Swan Hill if they had to take time off in the middle of the week to do their shopping. I support Mr. Gartside's proposal that a poll of ratepayers should be taken in the different centres to determine the weekly half-holiday. I know that the people of Swan Hill would be prepared to accept that method. Parliament should not take upon itself the function of making an arbitrary decision in this matter because, after all, the people should have the right to choose their own half-holiday. In the past shopkeepers had the opportunity to choose the Saturday afternoon, but many did not exercise their right.

I am opposed to the closing of shops on Saturday afternoon by Act of Parliament. The people of those towns in which the shops are open on Saturday afternoon should have the right to decide which day shall be their half-holiday. I believe Swan Hill presents a special case, but local shopkeepers will be treated fairly if the foreshadowed amendments are agreed to.

**Sir WILLIAM ANGLISS** (*Southern Province*).—I do not wish to cast a silent vote on the Bill. Mr. Kennedy put the position in a nutshell when he said that we should apply the principle of local option. If that is good enough for the hotel trade, it should be applied to the closing of shops generally. The question is: What do the people want? It is all very well for us to talk about granting a uniform half-holiday throughout the State, but conditions vary in different parts. Some localities are dependent on tourist traffic, which is at its peak on

Saturdays and Sundays and, therefore, shopkeepers in those districts should be given every consideration. In one letter I have received, the writer states that 40 per cent. of his turnover is done on Saturday. I can remember when I did 50 per cent. of my own week's business on Saturdays.

The Hon. P. L. COLEMAN.—Shopkeepers do that on Fridays now.

Sir WILLIAM ANGLISS.—In business undertakings of which I have knowledge the greatest volume of trade is done on Saturday morning. I can well understand a shopkeeper in a tourist centre saying "Why should I close my shop at the time when I do most of my business?" It would be unfair to require that. Mr. Byrnes submitted a good case for Swan Hill shopkeepers. When I visited Swan Hill I was impressed with its progressive business centre. If I were in business in that town I should not like to be told that I had to close my premises on Saturday afternoon. I repeat that the people locally concerned should be given an opportunity to vote on this issue; therefore, I shall support the amendment foreshadowed by Mr. Gartside. In a letter to me, a shopkeeper in Healesville stated—

We have always observed the Wednesday half-holiday. I consider a change to Saturday would be detrimental to business generally. I have had more than 30 years' business experience. Shopkeepers in any district should have the right to decide their half-trading day.

That is common sense, and country shopkeepers should be given the right to express their views. If shops were closed on Saturday afternoon, tourists going to the nearby hills would have to take all foodstuffs with them for the week-end. That would give rise to many difficulties. I repeat that we should apply to the trading hours of ordinary shopkeepers the principle of local option as it has been applied to the hotel trade.

The Hon. A. G. WARNER (*Higinbotham Province*).—I wish to discuss some of the broad issues involved in this measure. Organizations, property owners, and certain people are capable of caring for their own interests; but we represent the general public, which is entitled to service. There has been a constant restriction of service to the public in such

matters as transport and shopping facilities. Those restrictions are not felt by rich people who own motor cars and so are able to attend to their shopping needs during the week. In addition, they have refrigeration facilities in their homes and are able to store goods. The restrictions fall mainly upon the woman with a "pram" and two or three little children. For that reason, I shall oppose any further restriction on service to the community.

We shall have to look to services to provide employment in the future. This country has the highest percentage of people engaged in manufacturing processes, and for that there are economic reasons. But as we progress in our economy, we shall have to provide employment out of services. It has been proved statistically that countries enjoying a high standard of living give the greatest amount of service and have the highest percentage of their people employed in services. I believe we shall reach the stage in our manufacturing processes where private enterprise will be enabled to make the working week more like 30 hours than the present standard. If that eventuates, and a working week of four days is initiated, I hope that the three free days will not be like the average Melbourne Sunday, but that they will be a period in which services will be rendered to the community. I consider that that ideal is possible of achievement, and I support Mr. Gartside's amendment, because I am strongly opposed to all forms of restrictions on wages and employment.

**The Hon. G. L. CHANDLER** (*Southern Province*).—It is not my intention to delve into the history of the legislation relating to the closing of shops on Saturday afternoon. I agree with Mr. Gartside that the proposal embodied in the present measure could have been given effect by the Minister of Labour through an Order in Council. There has grown in the community the practice of obtaining signatures to petitions by a majority of shopkeepers favouring any particular closing proposal, and I repeat that legally the Minister could have achieved his objective by means of an Order in Council.

**The Hon. J. A. KENNEDY**.—He could revoke the regulations.

**The Hon. G. L. CHANDLER**.—That is so. In my view, it is not necessary to bring every small place in the State under a uniform law regarding Saturday afternoon closing. There are districts such as those represented by Mr. Gartside, Mr. Isaac, Sir William Angliss, and myself—the hill areas—where for many years metropolitan residents have had week-end homes. Many of those homes are at the moment occupied by other persons owing to the housing shortage in Melbourne; but the time will come when the owners will again regularly journey to their hill residences to spend week-ends. In that event, they will resume buying their provisions in the local centres, instead of acquiring them from metropolitan shops. From that point of view alone, it is not desirable to become enslaved to uniformity. The principle of uniformity as applied in other activities has been referred to by members of this Chamber, and I consider that the Housing Commission's undertaking affords a typical example. For instance, in Geelong, which is represented by Mr. McDonald and Mr. McArthur, the uniformity of the dwellings is an eyesore.

In 1943 an amendment of the principal Act made it possible for a portion of a municipality to change from Wednesday to Saturday afternoon closing. That amendment was mainly the result of representations from the hill areas. I am able to speak specifically of the Shire of Fern-tree Gully. In the outer metropolitan townships of Bayswater, Boronia, and Lower Ferntree Gully the change of half-holiday was the expressed desire of the shopkeepers and the public in general. In the higher areas, such as Upwey, Tecoma, Belgrave and other mountain parts, the people concerned did not at that time desire to come under the amending legislation. I quote from the remarks of the unofficial Leader during the debate on that amending measure—

I recognize the force of the contention that circumstances connected with trading should be taken into account when framing legislation of this character. We all acknowledge that conditions peculiar to seaside and to country pleasure resorts render it desirable that special trading facilities should be provided for the convenience of residents and visitors.

Those comments aptly covered the situation, and the unofficial Leader is to be commended on the vision he displayed.