

Mr. O'DONOGHUE.—It is natural that every man and woman working by the piece will work harder and harder, without keeping their health in view, for the sake of increasing their wages.

The COMMISSIONER.—Supposing that the men were working by the piece—would they not strain every nerve to run the wages up, and would not the employer, as has been said before, then begin to reduce the price paid to piece-workers?

Mr. O'DONOGHUE and OTHERS.—Yes, that's it.

Mr. O'DONOGHUE.—My experience as a workingman—and I presume that one who worked for twenty years as a printer ought to know something about it—has been this—and I think it applies to all trades: A man sets a number of people at work by the piece. They work harder than they ever did before, having nothing in their minds but how much they can put to their credit by pay-day. Directly the employer notices this, he says: These fellows were robbing me when I was paying them by the week. He begins to think that they "took it out of him" by not doing their best when working by the week. Then he begins to cut down the prices on various items of the work, saying: "I cannot afford to pay any more." He cuts away. The men exert themselves more than ever until, turning out more work than formerly, they again begin to earn high wages. Then the boss discovers that other prices have to be cut down, and the wages drop again.

The COMMISSIONER.—That has been the case. Is there a greater proportion of idle men in the trade now than formerly?

Mr. LOVE.—I don't know as to the wholesale trade. There is in the retail.

Mr. O'DONOGHUE.—Are you applying the question exclusively to the clothing trade? Do you want to make it apply to other trades? The carpenters here might say something.

The COMMISSIONER.—Of course. I was applying this particularly to the clothing trade. Yet any information in regard to other trades will be of benefit.

Mr. GUREFSKY.—We have got too many idle hands walking around in this city.

The COMMISSIONER.—Is there a decreased demand for labour, owing to a decreased demand for goods, or is the demand for goods as great as it was?

Mr. SIMS.—Lesser in ours—the custom trade.

Mr. LOVE.—In others more than in ours.

The COMMISSIONER.—That is, that the trade is greatly going into the wholesale.

Mr. SIMS.—Yes, passing from one into the other.

The COMMISSIONER.—Has there been an undue fostering of the apprenticeship system?—Do you know of instances where men make a practice of employing apprentices simply to get cheap labour?

Mr. LOVE.—I think that is the case.

The COMMISSIONER.—You think that is the case?

Mr. LOVE.—Yes.

Mr. GUREFSKY.—There is a man on Farley Avenue doing that kind of thing.

The COMMISSIONER.—Do employers who engage apprentices undertake to teach them the trade or a particular branch of it?

Mr. LOVE.—That is my experience, though I have had girls working for me through the whole routine. As a rule, however, the girls just learn one particular branch.

The COMMISSIONER.—Do you believe that there are men who just take apprentices in to get cheap work and then turn them out?

Mr. LOVE.—If they continue to work cheap, they don't turn them out.

The COMMISSIONER.—Are they taught the trade sufficiently as to enable them to get work at another place in another branch of the work?

Mr. LOVE.—The majority are not.

The COMMISSIONER.—Of course that is simply a swindle to take in girls and only pretend to teach them a trade.

Mr. LOVE.—You must look at it in this light. The majority just ask for work and not to learn a trade.