

## Student Information Sheet

### The Rev Dr Rutherford Waddell

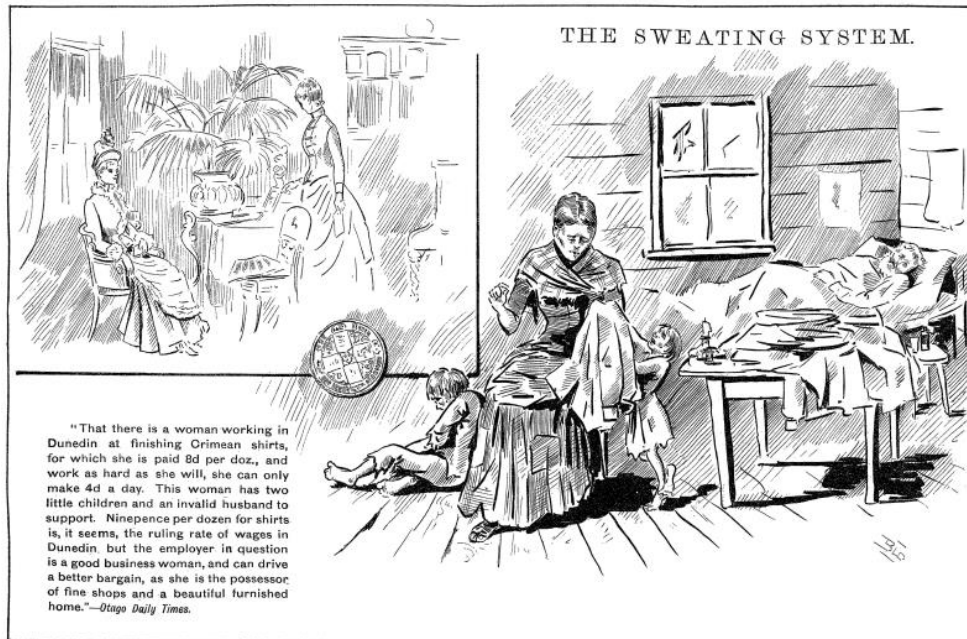


The Reverend Rutherford Waddell, (pictured) minister of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Dunedin for forty years, (1879-1919) was an innovative and creative leader with a passion for social justice and strong Christian principles. His leadership was particularly outstanding in his fight against "the sweating system". This practice involved the exploitation of piece workers for "starvation wages".

*"in Dunedin...wages were being earned that were totally inadequate to keep body and soul together....In this city women were sewing moleskin trousers ...from 8a.m. till 11pm and they were only able to make 2s a day."*

In 1888, he preached on "The Sin of Cheapness" in which he accused the church throughout the world of being preoccupied with the "moral and spiritual welfare of people" but failing to show more interest in their social welfare. The working classes "did not go to church on Sunday because the capitalists prayed for them on Sundays and preyed upon them during the other six days of the week." The 'sin of cheapness' resulted, Waddell claimed, because people desired bargains "that were produced at the cost of the life, prosperity, and happiness of hundreds and thousands of working men and women".

*From the NZ Observer and Free Lance, based on an article in the Otago Daily Times, 1888.*



Waddell's proposed alternative involved "*profit-sharing and co-operation*" and the upholding of "*the laws of Christ as the laws of commercial and social as well as of religious life.*"

Many in the church found this too challenging and instead believed it was a matter of individual responsibility and the church should work to change individuals rather than structures and systems.

Waddell had an enviable ability to take Christian conviction from the pulpit where words can be cheap out into the public arena where action can be costly. He moved from idea to action, a skill and courage the church has never been overly blessed with. His work within the Tailoresses' Trade Union and on the government appointed Sweating Commission was appropriate for a minister of the gospel. Without taking anything away from his achievement we might say he was simply acting out the implications of his ordination as a minister or servant of the Gospel.

Waddell understood himself to be a servant of the Kingdom of God embodied in the ministry of Jesus. It's a Kingdom or rule that's larger and more extensive than the boundaries of the church and the comfort of its members. The dream of a world shaped by God's loving purposes was the background music to all Jesus did and said and Rutherford Waddell, within the limits of human frailty, sought to live within the same dream.

**Comprehension and Inquiry** – group work. (The videos are suggestions. You might find others.)

Read the information on Rev Rutherford Waddell and answer the questions below.

1. What was the sweating system that Rev Waddell spoke out so strongly about?
2. Can you give an example from today's world?  
Suggested watching: [Would you still buy that dress after watching this?](#)
3. Explain the difference in meaning between "prayed" and "preyed"
4. What did Rev Waddell mean by "*The working classes did not go to church on Sunday because the capitalists prayed for them on Sunday and preyed upon them during the other six days of the week.*"?
5. What did Rev Waddell mean by "the sin of cheapness"?
6. Can you give some examples of the "sin of cheapness" in your own life and society?  
Suggested watching: [Nike sweatshops- Behind the swoosh](#)

7. What did Rev Waddell understand as the laws of Christ? Read some of the following [bible texts](#) before you answer or study Jeremiah 22:13-17 English Standard Version (ESV)

*“Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice, who makes his neighbor serve him for nothing and does not give him his wages, who says, ‘I will build myself a great house with spacious upper rooms,’ who cuts out windows for it, paneling it with cedar and painting it with vermilion. Do you think you are a king because you compete in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? declares the Lord. But you have eyes and heart only for your dishonest gain for shedding innocent blood, and for practicing oppression and violence.”*

8. Write a summary paragraph *describing* how Rev Waddell addressed issues of poverty in Dunedin in the late 19<sup>th</sup> early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and *explaining* the influence of his faith on his teaching and actions. Further information can be found in this [sermon](#) on Rutherford Waddell.