

533. The bars in which working-men drink have been described to us as “gloomy, badly lit, ill ventilated” (R. 2736). Many of them lack a bright or cheerful appearance. Many of them have no chairs or tables. In some cases the private bar affords more amenities than the public bar. It is usually smaller and more secluded. It may be upstairs. In some cases there are tables and chairs.

534. On the other hand, there is evidence that some private bars do not differ from a public bar, save in these respects, that the private bar does not open directly to the street and that there is a description “Private Bar” over the door. Nevertheless, higher charges are made in these private bars than in the public bars. On this point the representative of the Otago Labour Representation Committee was asked whether there was any justification for a difference in the price in a private bar and a public bar where, in both cases, the customer stood at the bar and was served over the bar. He replied, “There is no justification at all, for the simple reason that the barmen are paid the same wages; the liquor is bought at the same price; it comes from the cellar in the same way; it is served out in the glasses in the same way; and in each bar you stand the same way—so I do not know why there should be any difference in prices.”

535. The general distinction between the private bar and the public bar appears to be that the private bar is more frequented by the white-collar workers, while the public bars are more frequented by the manual workers who want the largest container sold (R. 1678).

536. In general, the bars afford enough room for those who wish to drink during the greater part of the day. During this period there would in most cases be room for some chairs and tables in the public bar. The position changes radically between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. in the public bars and in some of the private bars. The public bars become very much overcrowded. Men stand four or five deep. Handles of beer are passed over heads to and from the rear ranks. Complaint is made that when refills are required, the barman fills several at one time and that the overflow from one glass may contaminate another.

537. The conditions during the period between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. have been described to us in strong terms, of which we choose one of the least forcible and say that many customers consider the conditions to be “disgusting,” particularly when compared with the conditions which exist abroad, where a customer may sit at a table to drink. The Health Department considers that these crowded conditions involve hazards to health from overcrowding, the excessively rapid consumption of liquor, and the lack of proper hygienic standards in the washing of drinking utensils (R. 345).

538. The removal of these conditions depends on two questions:—

- (1) As to what kind of drinking is desirable; and
- (2) Whether the alterations required for that kind of drinking are practicable.

539. On the first question, the Commissioner of Police and other police witnesses prefer:—

- (1) That all bars shall be public and open directly on to the street;
- (2) That there shall be no bars upstairs; and
- (3) That drinking in bars shall be vertical.

The police witnesses admit that they are influenced in these views by a consideration of what would make for the most effective enforcement of the law and for the detection of drunkenness by the police and the barmen. On the other hand, there is a large volume of evidence from social workers, representatives of the churches, returned soldiers, and ordinary customers who prefer that, if there is to be drinking, there should be provision for drinking in a leisurely manner, at tables, in accordance with the standards which would be observed in a man's home or club.

540. We do not consider that the rigidity advocated by the police is practicable or desirable. We think that the private bar serves a useful purpose in much the same way as the provision of first-class accommodation on trains and steamers. Those who are prepared to pay more should have more comfortable conditions. We think also that