

time when most, if not all, employees are simply on the premises with practically no work at all to do. We are compelled to keep our business open and running for a very long time each day, and the conditions seem to me to warrant an adhesion to the number of hours that has already been provided for, and that has already been agreed upon by both employer and employee. As a matter of fact, I have got a staff of eight, and each one works to a definite time-table as nearly as possible. I cannot make it exact, but I make it as near as I possibly can, and, although sixty-five hours is the maximum time allowed, I do what I can to prevent them working that maximum time. But I find from practical experience, even then, that their time runs into anything from sixty-two to sixty-five hours. Then, again, with regard to the holiday aspect of the question, I must certainly add my protest to part of the wording of section 7. I would like to point out to you this: that in a hotel where, for example, there might be twenty employees, under this arrangement it appears to me that you might find yourself with half a dozen who would say "Look here, Mr. Palmer, I want a week's holiday every three months"; and the other portion might say, "Well, Mr. Palmer, I want half a day every week as usual." Very well, you make those arrangements. If I may use the term, you "make the punishment fit the crime," and you arrange the details of your business to make the necessary provision for that. Before it has been in operation for any length of time, one or other of that section, or part of both, come to you and practically have a right to demand to change that. And so you would be subject to chopping and changing about, solely at the caprice of the employee, and I certainly do not think that is a fair position to ask the employer or occupier to submit to. With regard to the giving notice in writing of these arrangements, I also think that that is most irksome, and quite unnecessary. We have our wages and overtime book, which is a necessary adjunct to the business affairs of a hotel, and which I quite approve of. That book is always open to inspection by the Inspector; and if it is not kept properly, then there is something wrong, and it should be put right. I think that book would cover everything that is asked for in the nature of an arrangement with the Inspector. I do not know that I need say anything further. As I have already said, Mr. Pryor has gone very fully into the matter, and I think I may rest content at entering my protest as I have already done.

4. *The Chairman.*] Would you mind giving us your opinion of the Sunday Labour Bill?—With regard to the Sunday Labour Bill, the conditions applying to hotels are such that I think it would be found to be impracticable. We are expected—in fact, we are practically compelled by law—to remain open, and if it is right that we should be compelled to give a twenty-four hours' or a day's holiday to each employee, I think it is only right and fair that an employer should also be permitted to have a twenty-four-hour holiday as well. The whole thing in that respect is one-sided, to my mind. Then, of course, there is the aspect of expense. It would naturally involve, as a corollary, an increase of the expense—and the expenses of running hotels now are very high, and in my opinion it does not leave any room for increases.

5. *Mr. Poole.*] Mr. Palmer, do you believe in labour legislation?—Yes.

6. You are in sympathy with it?—Yes, I believe in fair legislation.

7. Do you believe in an eight-hours day?—It depends upon the circumstances.

8. For general labour do you believe in an eight-hours day?—Where people are in continuous work, such as blacksmiths, or fitters, or labour of that character, then I say Yes; but where the conditions are different it is another matter altogether.

9. It is not of general application, you think?—No.

10. Do you believe in the half-holiday?—Yes.

11. For all employees?—Yes, I think that is a fair thing.

12. Do you think the employees in the hotels are responsible at the present time for the unrest created in the minds of the licensees?—Yes, to a great extent.

13. They are becoming more troublesome, are they?—Yes, but not the best of them.

14. Well, the worst of them. Describe them?—As I have already pointed out, I think, it is those who like to get as much as they possibly can for as little as possible.

15. You generally have a good number of "drifters"?—"Wasters" I call them.

16. "Wasters"—possibly they are. Do you know the reason why they are wasters?—I do not know.

17. Do you think the average industry is able to bear the restrictive labour legislation that is imposed at the present time?—I have not gone into that matter, and I am not able to express a definite opinion.

18. It is a question of profit, is it not? Will not the hotel business compare favourably with the average industrial enterprise in any city in the matter of returns?—I am not able to say; I have not had experience in other businesses.

19. Well, the profits are fairly good, are they not, in hotelkeeping? I am not anxious to disturb your feelings?—I do not think that is a fair question.

20. I think it is. I want to get a comparative statement respecting industries and hotel-keeping?—I am not at liberty to say just at the present moment what the profits are.

*The Chairman:* I do not think that you can expect the witness to reply to that question. It is apparent, of course, that if the business was not paying they would not be in it.

21. *Mr. Poole.*] The position I am taking up is that, if the witness can prove that the business is not able to bear the strain of this legislation, there should be some consideration extended to him. That is my point?—I can go this far, and say that the profits are not as great as a great many people fancy they are.

22. You made a statement to the effect that the volume of business was considerably reduced?—Yes.

23. Are we to accept that generally?—I am advised so.

24. And do you think it is necessary, as an employer of labour, to utilise the services of your employees for seven days in the week?—It is absolutely necessary in the hotel business.