

Housemaids, we contend, are domestics, and housemaids should be exempt from these hours. Sixty-five hours is what they are working under now, though we have no award for housemaids in Wellington. But the award in Dunedin was sixty-five hours, and therefore, as we have no award, I think we should have the right to remain under the same conditions. We have guests arriving at all times, and rooms have to be made up, and it is necessary to have them on duty. They work very well under the conditions. We have had no complaints from them, and I do not think it should be made to apply to them at all. They seem to me to be quite content. They have a good time. They get off in the afternoons to have a lie-down. They also get off on certain evenings. I think, therefore, that housemaids ought to be exempt from the provisions of this Bill.

Another point in relation to hall-porters. When we have to give hall-porters holidays we must get casual hands to do the duties pertaining to these positions. Now, a hall-porter is in a peculiar position. It is one that calls for a lot of tact and discrimination, and if we had to keep two the expense of two is too great. If we have to get any one in he may be able to lump luggage, but that is not the essential point. He has to meet all the conditions. And that same remark applies in connection with the night-watchman. You will all agree that a night-watchman in any hotel, large or small, is very essential. In addition to other duties, he carries out the very important duty of guarding the safety of the building in so far as fire is concerned. There is also the matter of leakage from bathrooms, where people leave taps running, and the night-watchman's duties are important in that respect, and therefore to ask us to grant holidays under those conditions to the night-porter and take on some one who is not interested in the building, and who does not know the run of the building or the conditions of the house, is asking a big thing, having regard to the safety of the travelling public. I think, gentlemen, that those arguments should appeal to you in that respect.

So far as we know, on the other side, in regard to employees, we do not know quite how things are working. Although this award has been made for cooks and waiters, it has only been in existence for a few months, and we are not aware that it is a success, and it might turn out not to be a workable thing. Moreover, the two cases I have given show that it has created a hardship, and the hotelkeepers have taken measures to redress that hardship by increasing their tariffs and deleting items from their tables.

1. *Mr. Poole.*] Have you had any request from your employees for the term holiday?—No, none.

2. Not from anybody?—No; in fact, they express no desire for it.

3. I am glad to hear that. You made reference to the increased cost under new taxation?—Yes.

4. Of course everybody who is interested in a business likes to see a fair margin of profit. Do you consider that there is a fair margin of profit?—No, I do not. I should be quite content to be a worker again under present conditions.

5. You made reference to the increased taxation on spirits: do you think it would be harder upon you to have taxation on food-supplies and spirits?—We have them on both now.

6. To a certain extent you have. My position is this: that where it is necessary to raise increased taxation, you have to choose between putting it upon the necessities of life or upon the luxuries?—Exactly.

7. Some members thought it would be better to put the taxation on the luxuries?—I am not objecting in any way. I am only quoting as an instance how it affects us.

8. Would it hit you harder if the taxation were put upon spirits or upon food-supplies—Tea?—Well, we are not in a position to say. It has only been imposed a fortnight. I could not give the figures. Foodstuffs we all know have gone up. I am not in a position to say.

9. Do you find in your contracts—I do not know how you carry on: do you have contracts?—We do not have contracts.

10. Do you find a general all-round increase in the cost of material lately?—Yes; sugar has gone up recently.

11. Oh! To what extent?—A farthing in the pound.

12. Do you get sugar in large quantities or in broken parcels?—It all depends on what you call "large quantities."

13. You say sugar is going up, and people are not getting the benefit of the reduced taxation?—I would not say that generally.

14. We wanted you to receive that benefit?—I see.

15. Directly or indirectly, does your establishment receive any benefit whatever from the gift that was made under the tariff revision?

*The Chairman.* You had better put the question the other way: has the price of sugar increased?

*Mr. Poole.* I have got another question, if you will allow me to put it.

*The Chairman.* No, we are not considering the—

16. *Mr. Poole.*] The witness made reference to the increased cost by reason of the surtax. Do you derive any benefit from the gift made to the brewing industry by the removal of the duty from sugar in 1907?—That is a very wide question. I am not prepared to answer that.

17. Do you think that it is an offset to the surtax at the present time?—I should not like to say. I am not prepared at present to venture an opinion on that.

18. *Mr. Fraser.*] The question was asked whether the profits in hotels were adequate, having regard to the amount of capital invested?—No, it is not, in many instances.

19. Does the carrying-on of hotel business differ from that of any other business?—Very much so, in this respect: that we are bound by the licensing law. We have no option.

20. Is there not a certain risk attaching to the hotel business in consequence of continuously pending decisions in regard to local-option polls?—Exactly. We have no guarantee of stability. We cannot look ahead in any way.