

to show that hotel workers were compelled in very many instances to work a hundred hours a week. We start, then, at a hundred hours a week. An award was made in 1902 giving seventy-seven hours to all classes of workers except porters, whose hours were eighty-four—twelve hours a day. That was the first reduction hotel workers got with regard to hours. They got, at the same time, an increase in wages. I have not the figures by me, but the increases have been considerable right through. In 1906 the Conciliation Board's recommendations came into force, and then the hours were further reduced to sixty-five per week. That will be found in Book of Awards, Vol. vii, page 522. Those recommendations were declared by Mr. Justice Cooper to be invalid after they had been in operation for about twelve months; and in the following year—1907—the case was fought out before the Arbitration Court—and fought very strenuously, as Mr. Carey knows—and again sixty-five hours were awarded. That award is in Book of Awards, Vol. viii, page 970. In 1910 another award was applied for and secured, and again sixty-five hours per week were prescribed by the Arbitration Court. Following that the union took action to get legislation in connection with the matter, and succeeded in getting the 1910 Act giving sixty-two hours a week for hotel workers, and thus compelling employers to pay wages based on a sixty-five hours week for sixty-two hours work. If this Bill goes through, all that the employers will have the right to ask for is sixty hours per week, which will mean a reduction in ten years of forty hours per week—a reduction of 40 per cent. in the hours worked. So when, in addition to that, you take into consideration the increases in wages and the improved conditions otherwise, I claim that I was not making any exaggerated statement when I said that the hotel workers of this Dominion had received more consideration than had any other section of workers. Now, with regard to the Bill, its main provision is twenty-four hours off in each week. I take it that that is the intention, and the intention is to do away with the present half-holiday; but I do not see anything in the Bill which repeals section 5 of the Act of 1910, subsection (e). That subsection reads: "Except as hereinafter provided, an assistant shall not be employed in or about a hotel or restaurant or its business at any time after two o'clock in the afternoon of such working-day in each week as the occupier in the case of each assistant thinks fit." Now, the Bill prescribes a twenty-four hours day on any day in the week, not on a working-day. Those words "working-day" in the present Act have been held to mean some day other than Sunday; and if this Bill goes through, unless some special provision is made for the deletion of subclause (e) of section 5, those affected by the Bill will probably find themselves in the position of having to allow in many cases a full day of twenty-four hours and another day from 2 o'clock in the afternoon. With regard to the practicability of a measure of this sort, while one has to admit that, sentimentally, nothing can be urged against the proposal, and while one has to admit that so far as possible no work whatever should be done on a Sunday, I submit that the question of whether legislation of this sort should be placed on the statute-book or not is bounded by the practicability of the proposals. The granting of a twenty-four hours holiday in each week to hotel assistants will be serious enough in all conscience to employers of that class of worker; but if that once becomes law, then where is that sort of thing going to end? There is no doubt that there are certain trades and occupations other than hotel work which require seven days a week worked, and, while we should make conditions as liberal as possible and as reasonable as possible, it is submitted that we must take into consideration the requirements of these trades and businesses. If this principle is adopted, then Parliament and the Government will be deluged with claims from all sorts of workers. Why, even the Government itself finds in connection with several of its Departments that it is absolutely unable to grant a twenty-four hours holiday in each week. And then, if you apply a six-day week to tramway services, ferry services, dairy factories in the busy season, and other trades that I could mention, you will simply wipe some of them out of existence; and I submit that no legislation should be passed that would involve such a consequence as that unless it were proved to be absolutely necessary in the interests of human life, or something equally serious, before such a thing is thought of. Now, in detailing to you the different awards and the changes in conditions respecting hotel workers, I should like to point out that each change made in connection with the hours involves a tremendous amount of reconstruction in the carrying-on of the businesses. In a large house it gives a very great deal of trouble. When the sixty-two hours provision came in with the ten-hours limitation I had a great deal to do with it, and those who were affected by the legislation found the utmost difficulty in arranging rotas so that the work could be carried on and the business be carried on at the same time. I was in Invercargill recently, in the Southland Club Hotel. There there is a staff of sixteen, and in order to comply with the provisions of the law Mr. Legge, the proprietor of that hotel, found himself compelled to let the whole of his servants off shortly after 7 o'clock in the evening. And if you went in there off the train coming in from Lumsden at about 8 o'clock, or the second express getting in very much later, all you could get was what Mr. Legge, or Mrs. Legge, or the daughter was able to provide for you. I submit that the very gravest reasons only should cause business people to be put under such conditions as that; yet this Bill proposes to put them under very much worse conditions—conditions that we claim will be found to be quite impracticable. Another serious aspect of the case is that in very many of our hotels—and I know what I am speaking about, because I have had occasion to go into the matter with regard to Arbitration Court work—the boarding parts of the establishment represent huge losses to the proprietors. And this alteration is not going to be made without expense. I have not gone closely into figures—Mr. Beveridge and some other witnesses have figures—but, as far as I can see, I shall not be at all surprised if in hotels that are recognized as hotels doing a boardinghouse business the extra cost is anything from £200 to £500 a year. It might be said, "What does the cost matter if we are going to do the right thing to our employees?" We submit that under present conditions the right thing is being done to the employees, that there is no real justification for this claim; and when, in addition, you take into consideration the impracticability of the proposal and the serious results likely to flow from giving a six-day week to this class of employees—and if it is right to give it to this class it is right to give it to every other class—when you