

if a six-day week is to be given effect to so far as the employment of labour in hotels is concerned, an equal right should be given to the hotelkeeper. For my own part, during the time I was running hotels I should have been very pleased to have had the privilege of being able to close my licensed premises just the same as a shopkeeper could close his and go home and have the necessary recreation that every man and woman is entitled to. There is another aspect of the matter which I think should receive some consideration, and that is that for a number of years—I think since somewhere about 1902—the hotelkeepers of New Zealand have been kept in a state more or less of turmoil because of the constant agitation that has been going on to change the labour-conditions with regard both to the hours of work and the wages to be paid. I think it will be found that during that time the hours of labour have been reduced by something over 20 per cent. or 25 per cent.—I want to keep well within the mark. Hotelkeepers to-day would welcome something in the nature of finality in this respect. They feel that if this Bill goes through in its present form, without provision being made for an equal reduction in the hours of employers themselves, it will be one-sided and not an equitable measure as between man and man. From the theoretical side it may appear at first sight a simple matter to introduce a six-day week into hotels, but in practice it is a different matter altogether. It is possible that there are certain hotels where the principle could be applied with a minimum of disadvantage to the employer and the public. As a matter of fact, during the last portion of the time when I was in the Edinburgh Castle Hotel, I employed seven hands outside the members of my family, and I instituted a system whereby six of those hands worked only six days a week. They were off on every Sunday, as well as on their customary half-holiday during the week; but, in order to do that, I was compelled to have regard—and I do not know that I should be compelled—to the necessity of observing hygienic rules and cleanliness, and in order to observe those rules I had to do the work myself, assisted by the members of my own family. Again, apart from considering the question from the point of view of principle, there is the matter of cost. I am credibly informed that if this Bill becomes the law of the land in its present form it is going to involve the whole trade in a very heavy increase in expenditure. Already hotelkeepers are taxed up to the hilt. Prices of commodities have risen; expenses all round have risen; but the hotelkeeper cannot see his way, for obvious reasons, to increase his tariff. There is another aspect of the matter to which I should like to refer, and that is that to the best of my knowledge and belief the employees in the Auckland District are not dissatisfied with their present conditions—in fact, a number have told me personally that such is the case. What they say is that it is not they who are seeking for further concessions, but it is a few of the leaders of their union or association. The employers, from their point of view, do not consider that they are placed upon a fair footing with what are called private hotels or boardinghouses. Those people are not being controlled, so far as the employment of labour is concerned, by the same conditions as licensed hotels. In conclusion, I desire to emphasize that the employer should be considered at least equally with the employees.

ERNEST NORDON, Secretary of the Canterbury Licensed Victuallers' Association, made a statement and was examined. (No. 10.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Will you state your views, as briefly as possible?—I should like to say at the outset that in the district in which I reside the relationship between employers and employees has always been of the most cordial character, a fact largely due to the very moderate demands of the employees in that particular district, and to the sensible attitude that has at all times been adopted by the secretary of the union, whom I see sitting in the room now—the Hon. John Barr. With regard to the Christchurch hotelkeepers, the exigencies of the position demand that every hotelkeeper in that city shall be in his hotel during this week. It is the busiest week in Canterbury, being Carnival week; and as each hotelkeeper is expected to keep the law and is at the same time made responsible for any lapse on the part of an employee, you will well understand that it is absolutely impossible for hotelkeepers from Canterbury to come before you this week and give evidence. There are forty-six hotelkeepers in the Christchurch District, and each hotel is full of boarders during Carnival week; and I respectfully submit to the Committee that before legislation of this kind is placed upon the statute-book, which is admitted on all hands to be going to mean a tremendous increase in the cost of running each hotel, it is only British justice that every licensee should have a chance to thoroughly consider the Bill. I respectfully submit that the hotelkeepers of the district which I represent have had no chance of considering the Bill, inasmuch as the text of it has never even appeared in the daily papers. By the courtesy of a member of Parliament representing one of the Christchurch seats I received a copy of the Bill, but the local hotelkeepers have had no chance whatever of considering the text of it. Although I tried very hard to get some of them to attend before this Committee, they one and all said the same thing—"It is absolutely impossible this week"; and it is for that reason that, on behalf of the members of the association I represent, I plead for some delay in the matter. I want to point out to the Committee that this proposed amendment to the Shops and Offices Act comes into conflict with the text of the last amendment, and for that reason also I submit the Bill wants further consideration. It was enacted in the last amendment that each employee should work sixty-two hours a week, and that no employee should work more than ten hours on any one day. The question I want to ask is, how can that time be worked out in five days and a half? It means that, in addition to the full day's holiday that is proposed in this Bill, the hotelkeepers are called upon to sacrifice another two hours, because they cannot under any circumstances get in more than sixty hours. No doubt the gentlemen who are supporting this Bill will tell you that two hours a week is a very small matter, but when you average that two hours over the large number of employees in some of the biggest hotels it represents a great deal to the licensee; and it represents even a greater loss than that which would be incurred by the half-day which it is proposed to add to the present half-holiday. I have gone into the financial aspect of the question in Christchurch, and I find that it is going to mean a loss of from £200 a year in the case of some of the smallest houses to anything from £800 to £1,000 a year in the bigger ones. I want, too, to point out that when a hotelkeeper has purchased the goodwill and the lease of a hotel under certain conditions, it seems rather unfair to spring legislation of this kind upon him, for in buying that hotel he has made no provision whatever for the extra cost that