

Act and Arbitration Court awards. The employees in some of these establishments are worked excessive hours. During the time I was secretary of the union I had repeated complaints from girls, some of whom were members of the union, about the long hours worked and the low wages paid, but we could not help them. The union made several attempts to have them brought under the award, but each time Mr. Justice Sim refused our application. Most of these boardinghouses employ more than three persons, but some of them only employ two. If the number in the Bill was reduced to two it would cover all the places in Dunedin. The greater portion of Otago and Southland is no-license, consequently there are more private hotels and boardinghouses in Otago and Southland than in any other industrial district in New Zealand. The employees in the greater portion of these places are not protected by any law. Owing to the decision of Mr. Justice Sim the operation of the union has been restricted, but if they are covered by the Shops and Offices Act the hours of employees will be reduced, and as these employees are mostly girls and women who are unable to fight for themselves we think they are entitled to the benefit of the Act. With respect to section 27, the union desires the hours for male workers fixed at fifty-six and female workers fifty-two, and that male workers be not allowed to work more than ten hours in any one day and females nine hours. We contend that if the number is fixed at eleven hours it suggests to the employer that so long as he does not work his staff more than eleven hours in any one day he is quite safe. He either conveniently forgets or is unconscious of the fact that the total number of hours for the week are exceeded. Before the formation of the Dunedin union the workers in some places worked pretty well round the clock. The first award fixed sixty-five hours for all hotel workers. When the award came into operation many cases were found where girls were employed between eighty and ninety hours. With one or two exceptions the staffs in the various hotels in Dunedin are the same in number as they were before the award, notwithstanding the reduction in hours, which goes to prove that the employers were able to so arrange the hours to keep within the Act without any great inconvenience. Either that or the Act is a dead-letter with them. No overtime is paid for except perhaps on special occasions, such as race meetings or show time, and then only in isolated cases. The union is strongly opposed to the sections which provide for the accumulation of holidays, as they consider it destroys the principle of a six-days week. The object of our fight is to secure a full day off each week on which the employees will be free from toil. It is not asking too much to claim what all other workers at present enjoy. The hotel workers generally work on 365 days in the year. On all general holidays, when other workers are enjoying themselves, the hotel worker is working his or her hardest. In no other Act of Parliament is there any provision for the accumulation of the weekly half-holiday. If the principle is good it should be made general and apply to all workers. If, on the other hand, it is not sound in principle, then all should be treated alike.

1. *To Mr. Long.*] I have attended several annual conferences of the hotel workers' federation, and the most important matter that has been discussed has been the hours of work and holidays, and especially the weekly day of rest. An application was made to Mr. Justice Sim to add certain boardinghouse-keepers to an award dealing with private hotels. Mr. Justice Sim said it would be necessary for the union to prove that these people were doing the same class of trade and were catering for the same class of people, and were doing so at or about the same tariff as those covered by the award. In the argument that took place I pointed out to Mr. Justice Sim that our award applied to all licensed hotels where the tariff ran from 5s. to 10s. a day, but no discrimination was made as to the wages paid to the employees in those hotels. I pointed out numerous other cases where no discrimination was made in hairdressing saloons, where the tariff was 3d. and 6d., the assistants were paid the same wages. It was no use, Mr. Justice Sim had made up his mind, and that was the beginning and the end of it.

2. *Mr. Hindmarsh.*] So you have never been able to get before the Arbitration Court at all?—Clubs are not supposed to be conducted for pecuniary gain, so they are cut out. In the first application we had clubs inserted. I am not going to say Mr. Justice Sim struck them out, but he suggested that we should.

3. *Mr. Long.*] How many people are employed in clubs, say, in Dunedin and surrounding districts?—I do not know for certain. There are more than twenty or twenty-five. In large boardinghouses an award was also refused.

4. Have you any knowledge of the number of people excluded from the benefits of the Arbitration Act?—They would run to some hundreds, I suppose. In our case we only picked the ones doing the largest boardinghouse business, and there are only about half a dozen of them. I should think twenty or thirty persons would be affected there, but the trouble was that there were many other places in which there were a larger number of them, such as Oamaru, Gore, Mataura, and Invercargill. It was useless for the union to try and bring these places under the arbitration award after the decision of Mr. Justice Sim, so the operations of the union were very much restricted. However, we consider that if these people can be brought within the scope of this Act it will be something.

5. You do not think that these matters can be safely left to the Arbitration Court? You prefer to have the matter dealt with by Act of Parliament?—We are not concerned how we get it done as long as we get it done. If we got fair treatment from the Arbitration Court we would not be so anxious about the Act.

6. You heard the question of Mr. Pryor put to Mr. McLean. He said he would sooner leave it to the Arbitration Court. Your experience of the Arbitration Court has not been a very happy one?—The Arbitration Court only adjudicates in cases brought before it, and the only way cases can be brought before the Court is by the formation of industrial unions. Now, there are hundreds of people—say, a thousand—scattered about, and unions cannot be formed in all cases to assist them.