

90. *Hon. Mr. Massey.*] Have you any idea what the hotel cost to build?—No, that is the trouble. I am paying 6 per cent. on the estimated cost of the hotel, and as it was built by day labour and by the proprietor it is very hard to find out the exact cost. The cost of the hotel and land is reckoned at £65,000—that was seven years ago. I reckoned it really at £45,000.

91. *Mr. Davey.*] Six per cent. is not out of the way?—No, not if that is the actual cost of the land and building.

92. And you pay what in rates and taxes?—£375, and also repairs and maintenance.

93. You have to pay for the renovation of wall-paper which may be damaged?—Yes; that is where the hardship comes in. We are not getting all the cream of it.

94. *Hon. Mr. Massey.*] Have you looked into the question of the feasibility of a Fair Rent Bill for hotels?—We have discussed it on various occasions, but it is hardly a subject for the licensees. You have a Tied House Bill which is inoperative.

95. *Mr. Hindmarsh.*] They can determine your lease at any moment?—Yes, one conviction for any offence is sufficient to terminate your lease.

96. *Mr. Davey.*] And you cannot sell without their consent, can you?—No, you must get consent to the transfer of the license, but you can force the consent unless they have something to bring against the incoming licensee.

97. *Mr. Hindmarsh.*] Do they still put a clause in the lease that the rent is reducible if the licensee buys his beer from some one in particular?—That is the tied house. My rent would be £85, but it is £75 if I take my beer from Staples.

98. *Hon. Mr. Massey.*] Is Mr. Gilmer Staples and Co. ?—Yes.

99. *Mr. Atmore.*] You evidently think that if the Government bring in legislation that increases your cost of management the Government should also look into the question of the rent?—Exactly. That is what the Arbitration Court would do. If they increased our expenditure in one way they would relieve us in some other direction.

100. If the Government bring in a law of this kind which increases your expenditure, then they should in fairness overhaul the whole transaction?—Yes.

101. In other words, bring in a Fair Rent Bill?—Yes, that would relieve us to a certain extent. There are certain things which we cannot put on to the public. If you put 3d. on to a hogshead of beer it would stick with the hotelkeeper all the time and not with the public.

102. *Mr. Hindmarsh.*] It would have to be done or wipe out the trade altogether?—That would be more serious still.

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ERNEST NORDON examined. (No. 32.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—I am secretary to the Canterbury Licensed Victuallers' Association, consisting of 126 hotelkeepers spread over eight electoral districts, including the City of Christchurch. I do not propose, Mr. Chairman, to weary the Committee by reiterating what has already been said, but I desire to endorse the statements made by Mr. Beveridge, and also to put in one or two statements from the South Island in regard to the extra cost which will be entailed upon hotelkeepers by the passing of this Bill. In the case of the Zetland Hotel, Christchurch, the tariff of which is 5s. a day, Mr. O'Malley says it will cost him £4 17s. 6d. per week in the event of this Bill providing for six days a week becoming law, and in that estimate he has not included the cost of board for the extra servants. In the case of Warner's Hotel, where there is a staff of thirty-five employees, the extra hands required to enable the employees to have a full day off each week would cost £611 per annum. For the Clarendon Hotel, Christchurch, the tariff of which is 10s. 6d. per day, the annual extra cost would be £513 10s. For the White Hart Hotel, £300 per annum, and Excelsior Hotel, Christchurch, over £300 per annum. The various hotelkeepers have asked me to place this information before the Committee, because, owing to the short notice, they have not been able to attend personally and give evidence. So far as the Bill is concerned, on behalf of the people I represent I desire to say that we very strongly object to any exemptions whatever. The question of widows was raised, and so long as these exemptions are allowed on sentimental grounds it is decidedly unfair. So far as Christchurch is concerned it would be distinctly wrong to legislate against licensed hotels and exempt certain private hotels and boardinghouses, because you would at once place them in unfair competition with the hotels. It was suggested that the State gave the exclusive right to forty-seven hotelkeepers in this city to retail liquor, but I would point out that I do not think there is a hotelkeeper who would not agree with what I say, that they do not think anything of that exclusive right. It is the State that has created the monopoly by refusing to increase the number of licenses and by prohibiting free trade in liquor, and if there was more freedom in the matter you would very soon do away with the monopoly. It is a privilege that the hotelkeepers do not think much of. The State calmly takes 16s. per gallon duty on all spirits consumed in this Dominion, and it profits very largely out of the liquor traffic. Then I want to draw the attention of the Committee to clubs. It is very fashionable nowadays to attack the liquor traffic, and if any experiment is to be made to start off with the licensed house, but there are clubs, among them working-men's clubs, where the servants work fourteen or fifteen hours a day. These clubs have no regulations restricting them, and I say it is distinctly wrong that all these regulations should be placed against the holders of licenses who conform to the laws and do their best to see them carried out. Speaking for the hotelkeepers as a body, we are all in favour of six days' work a week if it could be carried out. I am not in favour of working any man more than six days a week, but the internal economy of the hotel is so different from that of other businesses that it is not practicable to carry out such a scheme and at the same time give the same attention to the public as under the present conditions. I know that some members of