

TUESDAY, 2ND SEPTEMBER, 1913.

ELIJAH JOHN CAREY examined. (No. 40.)

1. *The Chairman.*] We will take your evidence, Mr. Carey?—I am authorized to give evidence on behalf of the Wellington District Council, on behalf of the New Zealand Federated Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Association, and on behalf of our own union. I have prepared a case from our point of view, as follows: I represent the Wellington District Council, the advisory committee of the Hotel Employees' Federation, and the Wellington Hotel, Club, and Restaurant Workers' Union. I am also instructed to give evidence on behalf of the Wellington Grocers' Union. But I prefer to give that evidence later, as it deals with clauses of the Bill not affecting the hotel and restaurant trade. Now, in reference to the proposals in the present Bill, so far as it affects the hotel and restaurant trade, the Bill is satisfactory in parts but very unsatisfactory in others. It is not nearly as progressive a measure as we anticipated. All the good it proposes is that some of the workers in hotels and restaurants shall work their present sixty-two and fifty-eight hours weekly on six days instead of, as at present, on six and a half days of the week, and that certain of the larger boardinghouses and private hotels shall be brought within the scope of the provisions of the existing Act. All other existing hardships of workers in the trade are left without remedy or redress except in a few minor instances. The proposal for a six-day week for some of our workers is contained in section 27, subsection (5) of the Bill. It gives limited effect to the principle of one day's rest in seven, and, but for the limitations, is to us the best section of the Bill. In the past the argument has been that a six-day week is impracticable in the hotel trade and that a seven-days working-week exists in the trade everywhere. Even if that were true we have every reason on our side why such a state of things should not be permitted any longer in New Zealand. Our plea for one day's rest in seven has the support of every section of the community except the section selfishly interested. There is nothing unsound or impracticable in the principle. It has Scriptural backing. "Six days shalt thou labour" was one of the earliest written laws, and one that was rigidly observed in the olden days. Of recent centuries, however, commercialism and machinery have held sway, and the worker has been looked upon in the same light as the machine, a source of profit-making. The machine ran seven days a week; the worker was expected to do likewise. But of later years Governments have stepped in to stop such sweating, and there are now many countries where legislation ensuring workers a weekly day of rest is in force or promised. It is no experiment that we are asking the Government to make. New Zealand, with all its boasted progressiveness, is much behind other countries in this reform. I will give some instances for the information of the Committee. Take France: Here is a country that less than fifty years ago went over to a spirit of rationalism. It abolished the Sabbath in 1880 and fixed no rest-day. Afterwards every tenth day was fixed as the national rest-day. Then, within the last twenty-years, the Churches and the Labour organizations worked together, and after combined effort got a legislative weekly day of rest established. The law was passed in 1906. The general sense of that measure is to make Sunday a rest-day in all trades, but to provide that in certain businesses where trade was carried on on a Sunday of necessity then another day of the week shall be given as the rest-day. I have the Act with me. The essential clause of the French Act is as follows: "No employee or workman shall be employed more than six days a week in an industrial or commercial establishment whatever its nature, lay or religious, or even if it exists for the purpose of professional instruction in benevolence. The above holds good of all branches of establishments. The weekly day of rest shall consist of not less than twenty-four consecutive hours." A further section allows of any day being given other than Sunday, and by rotation amongst the workers employed in hotels, cafes, restaurants, hospitals, asylums, almshouses, dispensaries, newspaper offices, &c. There are a few exemptions, but not for the hotel and restaurant trade, except that in establishments employing only four or less persons two half-holidays may be given instead of the one full day. There are one or two remarkable circumstances about the passing of this law. The first is that out of the whole membership of the French Chamber of Deputies of about six hundred, only one vote was cast in opposition to the Bill. Another fact is that after its passing the Minister of Commerce was asked by the Parisian waiters to exempt them from the Act, and that he refused. The exemption was sought by the waiters on the grounds that they would lose their tips. The Minister answered them that any worker should be able to make a living in six days of the week. A further deputation of bakers waited on the Minister to urge exemption from the Act for their carters, who were wanted to deliver rolls on Sundays. The deputation admitted that they had to give their horses a rest one day in seven to preserve their health and strength, and the Minister answered that the men were entitled to a rest-day as well as the horses, and refused the request of the deputation. The Act remained in operation, and now the labour unions are seeking an additional half-day's rest. So much for France. Now take Italy: in that country, in July, 1907, a year after the French Act, a similar measure was passed. I have a copy of the Act with me. Article 1 provides the weekly day of rest for all businesses. Article 4 permits of any day other than Sunday being given as the weekly rest-day in continuous businesses, including hotels and restaurants. This measure went through the Italian House with but little opposition also. I will quote another specific case for the Committee: In Canada there has been in existence for the last few years an Act called "The Lord's Day Observance Act," passed in 1906. This measure, like the Continental Acts, recognizes that there are some businesses which must carry on on Sundays, but provides, as the Italian and French Acts provide, that while the business may carry on for seven days of the week, the workers shall get some other day of the week as a full holiday. It grants hotels and restaurants the privilege of allowing their employees off one day of the week other than Sunday if necessary, and by rotation throughout the staff. It was a combination of Churches and Labour that promoted the Canadian Act. The Churches realized that where one day's rest in the week had to be given the tendency would be to make that day Sunday as far