

3. Do you mean to say that on a former contract, under the old conditions, you could make 6d. out of 6 shillings' worth of work which you made the standard of as 100 ft. of stuff?—Yes.

4. And that now you reckon on 10 shillings' worth of stuff?—And make a loss. That could be proved over and over again by builders here in Wellington if they were asked that question. With regard to the "needs wage," as proposed in the Bill, that we think is almost if not entirely impracticable. We should want such a great many standards set up that it would be almost impossible to adopt such a system. It is rather a difficult question to get over. We find the difficulty in this way: that if there are men in our employ possessing special merit it is a very delicate thing to remunerate them, because the men get talking to one another and say, "So-and-so has got a rise, and I want a rise." It becomes common talk, and every one wants a rise, so that if you desire to reward a man you have to do it quietly.

5. Can you not point out that the man is worth the increase, and talk straight?—They all think they are worth it, and you cannot differentiate. With regard to Mr. Pryor's address, in which he contended that a Conciliator should be appointed, we all agree with that method or course of procedure. We find that the more you can bring the parties together without any red-tape the better and sooner an agreement will be arrived at. There is a better feeling existing between the employers and the employees when a mutual agreement is arrived at without any "shall" business about it. There have been three disputes I was connected with which were settled in that way. We were just left to ourselves to talk the matter over round the table, and we came to an agreement, which was made an award, and which has worked out very well in Wellington. I might also emphasize the remarks made by Mr. Pryor with regard to the collection of fines. As he pointed out, it would either mean that the employer would have to pay the fine or the worker would be penalised in such a way that he would have difficulty in finding employment, because he would simply be passed on from one to another and be the first to go when an opportunity occurred of discharging him. I do not know that I need take up the time of the Committee any further, and will simply add our approval of what the Employers' Federation has been pleased to put before you through Mr. Pryor.

FRIDAY, 21ST AUGUST, 1908.

MARIANNE ALLEN TASKER examined. (No. 16.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You appear here, I believe, as the secretary of the Wellington Domestic Workers' Union?—As the president. I also appear for the Christchurch Union.

2. I understand there is some difficulty with regard to your unions?—Yes, the difficulty of registration.

3. That is the point on which we wish to hear you: What is the position?—The position is this: that the Act does not cover, I believe, domestic workers—not entirely. It is understood by the union that it covers a section, such as lodginghouse-keepers and people who keep domestic workers and go into business. It is thought these girls are not kept for "comfort" purposes, but for hire. As I read the definition of "worker" contained in the Act, "'Worker' means any person of any age of either sex employed by any employer to do any skilled or unskilled manual or clerical work for hire or reward." We think it would be useless just to cover one section of domestic workers unless you could bind the whole.

4. You say the definition of "worker" in the Act partially covers your union?—That is so.

5. Have you had any confirmation of that opinion from any one else?—We did not get a legal opinion. We left it to the Labour Department, and thought there was a clause in last year's Bill which would include domestic workers, but it is deleted from this Bill. If that definition could be inserted it would cover what we want. We were registered, but through some fault the registration lapsed.

6. How long has your union been formed?—Nearly two years ago it was formed—or a year and eight months; but I went to England, and left the union in charge of, principally, a member of the Wellington Trades Council.

7. Can you give us the date when the union was registered?—About January, 1906.

8. Did you then proceed to lodge any complaints and take steps to obtain an award?—The girls did, I believe, in my absence. They called a meeting of the employers, and were confronted by four lawyers, which frightened them, and the thing collapsed. They thought they were going to Court.

9. How did you manage to lose your registration?—They simply let it lapse through ignorance.

10. Has the registration to be annually renewed?—No; but they have to send in annual returns, which the girls failed to do.

11. You failed to furnish the statutory returns, and so the registration was cancelled?—That is so.

12. Now I suppose you are all sorry?—Yes. I was not aware of it when I came back, and I was asked to put new life into the union.

13. Have you applied to be registered again?—Yes.

14. What answer did you get?—That we had no standing: we could not come under the definition of "worker," because domestic servants were kept for comfort and convenience.

15. Has the Act been altered in the meantime?—No; I believe not.

16. Then, the Department had made a mistake when registering your union?—I believe the Department took Dr. Findlay's opinion, and he held that we could not come in under the Act.

17. Can you tell us anything about the position of the Christchurch Union?—No. They simply wrote and asked me to appear for them. They said they would send me their arguments, but I have not received them yet. They said the need of power to register covered the whole of the domestic workers in the Dominion.