

take into consideration the serious issues that are involved and what it is going to land us in, we submit that Parliament cannot possibly accede to the proposal put forward in the Bill. We submit, further, that Parliament makes a mistake in dealing with the question of hours in connection with trades that are in a position to go to the Arbitration Court. We know that the only answer we get to that contention is that Parliament is the supreme Court of the Dominion, and that Parliament must rule. Our retort is, "We grant you that, but Parliament has delegated its duties, so far as details and working-conditions in connection with these trades are concerned, to the Conciliation Councils and the Arbitration Court." As it is, unions go to the Arbitration Court and make use of that machinery, and then come to Parliament and say, "We have got all we can from the Conciliation Council and the Arbitration Court; now we want you to give us something more." We submit that it is most unfair for the unions to take up that attitude, because in the Conciliation Councils you have those who are themselves cognizant of all the details in connection with the work of these trades and industries. On the Arbitration Court you have those who are dealing with these matters week in and week out throughout the year, and they have information not only in the actual case that is before them, but information from all over the Dominion, which guides them in making their awards; and we submit that it is absolutely impossible even for this Committee, after hearing evidence in this way, and still less is it possible for Parliament itself, to get the information to justify it in going into these details in connection with the working of our trades and industries. We submit that as a very serious proposition, and we would ask this Committee in dealing with this measure to make a report to that effect—that this is a matter that should be dealt with by the machinery provided by law, and that it is impossible for a Committee of the House to get, in the short time at its disposal, sufficient information to warrant it in putting these restrictions upon employers.

2. *Mr. Okey.*] The Court has that power now?—Absolutely. That is just the cruelty of the position. Take the action of the Cooks and Waiters' Union after the last award. In 1910 the sixty-five hour regulation was made. It was renewed from the previous award. Evidence was given—if I remember aright the union here in Wellington put between thirty and forty witnesses into the box—evidence was given on behalf of the union and on behalf of the employers. The Arbitration Court had not only that information, but it had information from having been invoked in similar disputes throughout the Dominion; and after going into the whole matter it awarded sixty-five hours and some other conditions. The union immediately got to work, and got at Parliament, and got legislation giving hotel workers sixty-two hours, with ten hours a day limitation. If I remember rightly we had an eleven-hours limitation in the award, Mr. Carey?

*Mr. Carey:* All your statements are wrong.

*Witness:* I am quite prepared to stand by that, at any rate. And we say that it is wrong. We say that either Parliament should take the whole responsibility and do the whole of that industrial work—and, if it does, it will have quite enough to do without attending to any other legislation at all—or it should leave the tribunals it has set up by law to handle them, and refuse to have anything to do with them. I do not know that I have anything more to say. I want to leave particular details to those who have to follow me. Mr. Beveridge, I believe, gave some evidence last week, but he wishes to put before you some further facts and figures which he was not prepared to give you at that time. Then other gentlemen will give evidence.

3. *Mr. Okey.*] I take it that the employees are paid according to the hours they work?—As a matter of fact, by the award which has expired wages were provided for sixty-five hours' work. Those same wages are being paid at present for sixty-two hours' work. If the employees work overtime they are paid overtime rates.

4. If the working-time is brought down now to six days a week, will the employees expect the wages to be reduced?—I fancy there would be a great howl about it. I do not think they expect anything of the sort. Each reduction in hours that we have had so far has been accompanied by an increase in wages, and we are just afraid that a further reduction in hours may be accompanied by a further increase in wages. I do not think there is much hope of getting any decrease in wages with reduced hours.

5. You admit that there are some trades in which it is almost impossible to limit the hours to any great extent? Take milking, for instance: would it be possible to carry out these conditions on a farm?—That is one of our contentions. In both milking and dairy-factory work the milk must be handled day by day and every day.

6. How would this affect the smaller hotels where they keep only one or two waiters—perhaps one?—You cannot imagine any hotel that would want less than one extra servant, and where there is only one servant now that would double the wages cost. Where a hotel has two or three servants, one or two extra employees make a great difference. But take it from the point of view of a hotel employing fifty: they would need to have seven or eight extra hands. They would not only have to pay them the wages, but they would have to feed them as well and provide accommodation for them—or else pay them more. The award provides that if hotel workers do not get their board and lodging they shall receive extra wages. I think probably you will get the actual cost from some of the others who are giving evidence; but I am satisfied the extra cost will surprise even the members of this Committee. Then it must be remembered that in hotels the guests must be attended to on the whole seven days of the week, and that is what justifies the seven-days-a-week employment.

7. You argue that the Arbitration Court has full power to give these hotel workers this twenty-four hours off if they can bring evidence to show that it is justified?—Surely.

8. And they want now to come behind the Court to Parliament and make it impossible to work them more than six days?—That is so.