

8. How long is the award for?—Until August, 1913.

9. Would not the extra rooms you would require for the extra employees be an extra tax on you: would you have to build?—No, because in the country we have to keep our staff whether they are busy or not.

10. And you have plenty of rooms at the hotel for your staff?—Yes, but we have the option of paying them 5s. a week to go outside.

11. Do you not think it will affect the small hotels, where they keep a limited number of servants, more than the larger hotels? Take, for instance, a country hotel employing two girls who have to do the waiting at table and so on: how are they going to work their business?—They would have to get at least one additional hand.

12. So that it will affect those small houses to a greater extent than the larger hotels?—Yes, unless the proprietor and his family wish to do the work themselves, which would be very hard on them considering that they have to take charge of the bar until 6 o'clock the next morning. For twenty-four hours you are at the mercy of the travelling public.

13. Is there not a tendency at the present time on the part of a number of people to give up housekeeping and live in hotels?—That has been the case in the district I represent.

14. That is the growing tendency?—Yes.

15. And you have to keep servants for them?—Yes. We have to keep permanent boarders.

16. And the law requires you to supply them with food and drink?—Yes, at any time they come along. Under the Licensing Act, in a case at Taranaki, some one called at a hotel in the night and the proprietor refused him a meal, but the man laid an information and had the proprietor prosecuted for not supplying him. That was between 8 and 9 o'clock at night. So, if the Bill comes into force, how can we comply with the Licensing Act?

17. *The Chairman.*] Is not the statement you have just made, that the hotel charges are low, the reason why people are giving up housekeeping and living at hotels?—Yes. We have to cater for a different class in the country, and we have to keep a large staff at times during agricultural shows and race meetings. We have to keep our staff all the year round because we cannot always put our hands on extra employees. For that reason I have to keep an extra staff.

JOHN HOWARD HINTON examined. (No. 13.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Whom do you represent?—I am a master grocer and president of the Master Grocers' Association of Dunedin, which is not exactly affiliated to, but is in touch with, similar organizations throughout New Zealand. At the beginning of September our various organizations waited on the Premier with a deputation to draw his attention to certain hardships they suffered under the Shops and Offices Act, and Mr. Massey in the course of his reply gave us an assurance that in the event of amendments being made in the Shops and Offices Act our organization would be given an opportunity of voicing their grievances and objections to the clauses to which we were opposed. I have been touring the Dominion during the last month in connection with my office, and received a telegram yesterday from the secretary of our organization informing me that the Labour Bills Committee were taking evidence, and asking me to attend and give evidence this morning.

2. We are only considering one amendment to the Act at present?—This is an amendment to the Shops and Offices Act, I take it. Your point, I understand, is that it only deals with one amendment.

3. That is all we have before us now. Have you any other clauses affecting this Bill which you wish to put before us?—Our position is this, as we pointed out at the time of our deputation—of which, I suppose, reports are obtainable by members of the Committee—we run our business just now on certain occasions in defiance of the law. We find that certain restrictions with reference to the hours that our assistants can work—more particularly the hours of the carters—are simply such that we cannot comply with the law and carry on our business. We were promised consideration in this respect by the Premier, and word was sent to the Inspectors of the Labour Department not to insist on a rigid interpretation of the law; but we maintain that if there is to be any amendment of the Shops and Offices Act this session we are entitled to redress in the manner we indicate—that is, that the Arbitration Court should have restored to it the power to fix the hours of individual trades requiring special consideration. This is a matter of urgency so far as my association is concerned, because we are working under an expiring award and a new award is shortly to be made. The Wellington award has already been fixed, and the Auckland award has been fixed up in a similar way, practically perpetuating the grievances of the grocers for the term of the award—that is, three years. We would like, if there is any possibility, to get redress and to have power to go before the Arbitration Court sitting in Dunedin shortly, and get it to hear our evidence and settle our case on its merits. At the present time, when the Arbitration Court is faced with the proposition from either side with regard to the hours of work takes up the attitude that the hours are fixed under the Shops and Offices Act, and that it is not within their jurisdiction to make any alteration therein. I do not think it is necessary for me to enlarge on the actual way in which the hardships affect us, but I may say that at special times in our trade—such as at Christmas-time and before holidays—we are really placed in the position of being at the beck and call of the Labour Department's Inspector as to whether the Department will give us permits for our carters to work in the delivery of goods and to do two and sometimes three days' work in one. We would also say that in other Labour Bills there is legislation for the hours of women and youths, and in the Factory Act it applies to the payment of overtime to men who are employed. A very large proportion of our employees consists of male adults who are quite capable of looking after their own rights without the assistance of a law which is regarded as not essential in connection with factories. There is no desire on the part of the Master Grocers' Association to evade the payment of overtime, and we are quite prepared to pay for all work done according to the scale laid down by law; but we do maintain we have a right to ask that our employees, being adult males, should be at our disposal on certain occasions without our having to apply to an Inspector for a permit, as if they were women and children.