

Letter from Beatrice Skegg to Ramsey MacDonald MP, 1906

3/5/06

Mr Ramsey Macdonald M.P.

Dear Sir

I hope you will excuse the liberty I take in writing to you, but I am pleased to see that we have one friend by your speech of to-day, and you are quite correct in thinking that we dressmakers and milliners would like to have a word in this matter.

I think that the hours ought to be shortened instead of lengthened as I have left business on account of the long hours.

When I was at business I never knew when I was going home, it was anything between 7 and 10 also 4 on Sat, it makes one's life a misery to be always at work and for such a few paltry shillings a week.

I should like to state that I don't think it is any advantage having the long hours as I have worked in places where the hours have been six and seven and one on Sat, and I know that we have finished as much work, if not more, than the other places who work late.

How is it that men are crying out for 8 hours a day when we girls have to work so long, and we are supposed to be the weaker sex, also why can't we have half a day in a week nearly all men do so they talk about Chinese slavery abroad but they should look home first as we are not the only girls who are badly used there seems to be only typewriting for us if we want decent hours.

The heads of the firms seem to have everything their own way I know of one place in the town who make you go home for a quarter of the day if you are one min late but they don't mind how long they keep you at night that seems to count as nothing they don't get any overtime money or tea given to them.

If you would like any more particulars I will send them to you as I have been through it all and I have one sister a milliner and one a dressmaker besides myself so you cannot get better information than I can give you.

I should be pleased if you do not divulge my name as I think it would do my sisters harm and probably myself if I have to go out again.

I remain

Yours Respectfully

Beatrice Skegg