

106. In the late furniture dispute in Auckland did not the employers get at the newspapers?—I am not aware of the particulars of that case, and cannot give an opinion on it.

107. Have you ever seen copies of the monthly publication called the *Labour Journal*?—Yes, I have seen it at times.

108. Have you seen the information in that journal with regard to the rates of wages in different places?—Yes.

109. Have you any reason to suppose that the statements made there are correct?—I presume they are pretty accurate as far as the general average is concerned.

110. I think it was the first speaker who suggested that the bulk of the information, with regard to the cost of production, is given in the income-tax returns?

*Mr. Thompson*: Yes.

*Mr. Tanner*: Are you aware that the information which is sent in under the Income-tax Act is purely confidential, and can never be divulged?

*Mr. Thompson*: Yes; but we object to the clause in this Bill, because if the information is only required for statistical purposes, then it should be supplied to the proper Department.

*Mr. Tanner*: I am willing to object all round if you will give me reasons.

*Mr. Thompson*: If the Minister wants information on this subject for his Department, he can get it from the proper Department.

Mr. WILLIAM NAUGHTON made a statement. (No. 17.)

*Mr. Naughton*: We consider this is a Bill which is urgently required. In fact, the Trades Councils and the labour organizations of the colony have been asking for it for the last eight or nine years. We recognise that it is only right and proper that there should be reliable industrial statistics, and these cannot be obtained at present. Any one with a knowledge of statistics has only to look through the Labour Department returns and they will find that they are very wide of the mark. They are most unreliable. We believe the Department does its best to obtain reliable information, but it has no sure way of verifying the statements made to it. This Bill will enable proper statistics to be procured. In my opinion, the last bookbinding statistics are very unreliable; and in the case of the bootmakers I believe that, as a matter of fact, the statistics given by the Labour Department with regard to piecework were taken from the rates which prevailed two years ago, whereas there has been a fresh award since then, and the rates have been changed. Therefore the statistics in that respect are utterly unreliable. We have been asking for a number of years for a Bill of this sort, and there has been no objection made to it. We never heard of any objection on the part of the employers. In fact, there has been no objection from the employers themselves. It has only arisen from those who if on our side would be termed paid agitators. So far as the statement that this Bill will enable a system of espionage to be carried on, we cannot see that it will do anything of the kind. We do not think that it will give any greater power than is already possessed by Inspectors under the Factories Act, and therefore we cannot see why any objection should be made to the Bill. In the census returns many more things require to be answered than are required under this Bill. It is a Bill to enable reliable statistics to be obtained with regard to people engaged in the industries of the colony, and we believe that will be an advantage to everybody. I have nothing more to say on behalf of the Trades Councils.

Mr. ANDREW COLLINS made a statement. (No. 18.)

*Mr. Collins*: This question has been before the trades and labour organization for the last ten years. We have always advocated, and do now, a Bill on the same lines as that which was introduced by Mr. Reeves in 1893. I will read a resolution which was carried unanimously at the last Trades and Labour Conference, which was held at Greymouth. I think it will give the case as far as we are concerned, and it will save time. I may say that we are prepared to go one better, and say that "what is sauce for the goose should be sauce for the gander," and that the Department should be able to obtain information from the trades-unions in the same way as from the employers in order to enable them to prepare the statistics. This is the resolution which was carried unanimously at the Greymouth conference:—

"Mr. Rusbridge (Canterbury) moved, and Mr. Collins (Wellington) seconded, 'That this conference again urges upon the Government the necessity of introducing a Bill on the lines brought forward by the Hon. W. P. Reeves in 1895, to enable the Department of Labour to demand reliable statistics for its reports.' The mover stated that this was a very important measure, and was intended to give the Department power to collect information from all sources, such as requiring employers to furnish returns of every workman employed by them, stating the nature of employment, hours of labour, and whether the workman is paid daily or other wages, or by piece, and such other particulars as may be necessary to ascertain the relations between employers and workman. It would also empower the Department of Labour to investigate the causes of disputes between employers and workers, and require either party to furnish statements setting forth the matter and causes that led to the dispute. If this Bill became law it would, to a large extent, do away with the difficulties under which the unions labour in their efforts to get information as to the true state of any particular industry. Such information is very necessary when bringing cases before the Conciliation Board or Arbitration Court, and, seeing they are not in a position at present to obtain it, this measure would be of great advantage to workers. The Department would have power also to collect information from friendly societies, industrial societies, and trades-unions. It would be of very great assistance in the compilation of the *Labour Journal*. He was quite sure that all those present would agree with him that the journal issued by the Labour Department was a very valuable publication, and it was very necessary that every opportunity should be given to obtain reliable information from all sources, as it is desirable that the people of the colony should be in a position to know in what condition the industries of the country are. The motion was carried unanimously."