

A resolution to that effect has been carried unanimously for the last ten years. With regard to the argument of the employers, that the information may get out and injure them in their business, I have only to say that the Income-tax Department has power to obtain all the information it requires in order to ascertain whether the returns supplied to it are reliable or not; and, as was pointed out by the last speaker, under the Factories Act the Department can overhaul an employer's books to obtain the information it requires; and I do not think there is one member of this Committee who would say that the Department has made an improper use of the information so obtained. Relating to the statistics which would be obtained, we, as a labour party, say this: that if we knew the particulars of an employer's business and the real position which he held in the particular industry, some of us might not feel it right to go on and make a claim on that industry, but as it is we do not know where we are. We say that the Labour Department has practically got its hands tied, and, even with the powers conferred by this Bill, will have them more tied than any other Department, and we think they should be allowed to expand not only in the interest of the employees, but of the employers. I cannot see anything in the Bill which will injure an employer. In fact, in some instances it would have the effect of stopping the labour leaders from asking for small concessions when they knew that the state of the industry would not allow of them. I think the employers should take advantage of that, and see that their statistics are reliable. The secretary of the Bootmakers' Union is not able to be present to-day, but if he were he would be able to give the Committee reliable information as to the importation of boots into the colony. The bootmakers know very well that the statements made by the employers before the Court regarding the local industry were very far-fetched. At present the Labour Department has no means at its command whereby it can get reliable information in regard to trade, and we think that if the Department had the power to give such reliable information we should see that there is a large amount of importation of manufactured boots, which is increasing, as you will see by the returns, while the increase in the boots manufactured in the colony is considerable, and has been increasing every year. This we know by the number of hands engaged.

Mr. DAVID McLAREN made a statement. (No. 19.)

*Mr. McLaren:* In connection with this Bill I may say that I represent the same bodies that I represented this morning when giving evidence on the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Bill. It appears to me that this is a measure which is absolutely necessary, not in the interests of any particular class of people in the colony, but of the people of the colony as a whole. It would be helpful to the Legislature, to the local governing bodies, to officers of societies both of employers and of workmen. I cannot conceive of a proper Labour Department without such Department being a bureau of statistics. I had occasion some short time ago to get information from the American Department, and I was astonished to find how complete were the statistics of the Chicago Bureau. It appears to me that the provisions of this Bill are in the interests of the colony as a whole, and should not be regarded as being in the interests of any special class of the community. I think the chief suggestions you want are towards improving the Bill which is before you. These are suggestions which might be taken from men who are in the position of experts in various departments. One suggestion I have to make, which comes from Canterbury Trades Council, is that in clause 7, subsections (a), (b), and (c), provision should be made that the information received under this section should be attested before a Justice of the Peace, also that penalties should be imposed in cases where false information is knowingly supplied. Of course, there is provision for neglect or refusal to supply information, but it appears to us that there should be an attestation of the information supplied, and that in cases where false information is supplied the persons so acting should be liable to a penalty. In connection with wharf work, the class of work with which I come most in contact, the position is that in the Old Country there has grown up a state of things that might be plainly spoken of as deplorable. I believe that that in a measure is due to the fact that the governing bodies in the Old Country have not from the earliest date kept records of the trade of the ports. In the London Docks the authorities are so numerous that it has been necessary to get the London County Council to buy them at a great cost, and to form one controlling authority. I know the bad conditions there have been growing up for a great number of years, and the authorities were absolutely in the dark as to them. When the big dockers' strike took place at Home, and the question came up as to the conditions under which the dockers lived, the authorities were all in conflict with one another because none of them had any statistics on which they could rely. I think we should take steps to avoid anything of that kind in a young colony like New Zealand. I find that in New Zealand a custom is growing up which is very much in vogue in the Old Country. There is, for instance, in connection with wharf work a great deal of subcontracting. Section 7 of this Bill, subsection (b), provides that the employer shall state in writing "the full name of every person having the principal control, superintendence, or management of any kind of business carried on by such employer." I think it should also be necessary, besides giving the name of the principal manager or superintendent, to give the names of those who have subsidiary control. In connection with wharf work, that would mean giving the names of the various controllers, foremen, or stevedores in cargo-work and in coal-work, so that there might be a full knowledge of the trade in any particular port. There is also this further suggestion which we have to make with regard to subsection (a) of section 7. It is provided in that subsection that the officers of industrial unions shall be required to supply information regarding membership, benefits, and other advantages under the union or society. I think these officers should also be required to give information as to the customs of the trade or calling. There are customs which grow up in connection with every trade or occupation, which are not set out in any rule-books, and which customs, at the same time, have great power in operation in connection with various occupations. Such information would be of great value if supplied by the officers of the institutions. I have nothing further to suggest. I will only add that