

it appears to me that this measure is so much in the interest of the whole colony that I cannot conceive why any one should oppose its passage.

Mr. WILLIAM THOMAS BARNES made a statement. (No. 20.)

*Mr. Barnes :* I can only indorse what Mr. McLaren has stated in connection with this Bill. I think it meets the case, if not altogether in its entirety, still, very near it. As Mr. McLaren has stated, there are one or two things in which it might be amended; but, still, we think that half a loaf is better than no bread, and we are prepared to accept the Bill as it stands, and hope that it will be passed. One matter I should like to allude to is in connection with clause 2, which says, " 'Employer' means any person, firm, company, or local authority employing labour of any kind for hire." I should like to have that improved by the Committee so that it shall be provided that it is no matter what firm you may be working for so long as that firm employs you. Another omission is that it is only provided that the employer shall state in writing the name of every person having the principal control, superintendence, or management of any kind of business carried on by the employer. I think that those who do the managing, under the principal manager, should also be included in that provision. These are the only points that I can see that should be really impressed upon the Committee. As far as the rest of the Bill is concerned, I am perfectly satisfied that when I go back to Lyttelton, if I take this Bill with me passed, we shall all be quite satisfied with the terms of it.

111. *Mr. Tanner.*] You referred Mr. Collins to clause 7, and said something about getting returns from friendly societies and industrial associations. I presume you would like to see the scope of inquiry made larger?—Yes.

112. Do you think that if the Department gets this enlarged information it will use that information as a basis for prosecution? Is there any reason to apprehend that?—I do not think so.

113. Look at the first lines of clause 6, and then at the subsection of clause 8, which provides, "Every person who commits a breach of this provision is liable to a fine not exceeding fifty pounds." Do you think the provisions of this Bill in that respect would empower the authorities to initiate a prosecution?—I do not think so.

114. Do you, Mr. McLaren, think so?—No.

*Mr. Tanner :* The object is to obtain correct knowledge with regard to the industrial occupations in the colony.

*Mr. Collins :* That, to my mind, is the object of the Bill; and I say that there is nothing extraordinary in the provisions of the Bill in regard to the inspection of the books of employers, because the Department has already that power under the Factories Act, and I have never heard of a case in which they have used the information thus obtained in prosecuting an employer.

115. *Mr. Tanner.*] Of course that would be only for the purposes of the Factories Act. The Department might come across the fact that an employer was working against the law, and he might have his attention called to it, but not necessarily for the purpose of prosecuting him?—That is so.

*Mr. McLaren :* I take it that there are many cases brought against employers under the Conciliation and Arbitration Act which would not be pressed forward if the officers of the industrial associations had reliable information to depend upon. You can quite understand that things are now often forced through, whereas if there were reliable information they would very likely not be pushed forward, and the cases would be more easily settled.

116. *Mr. Tanner.*] You, Mr. McLaren, have referred to customs which are peculiar to certain trades, but which are not laid down in the rules. Would you define any of them?—There is the custom, for instance, with regard to overtime rates. In some cases there is time and a half allowed for overtime, and in others it is time and a quarter. I think it would be of great advantage if the Department were able to obtain reliable information in regard to these points.

117. Is it a fact that building labourers are allowed to carry away the empty cement cases?—That is a general custom in the building trade, and again, in the carpenters' trade it is the custom for the men to carry away the chips and a certain quantity of small wood.

118. Is that included in the award?—No.

119. Is it possible that in an action for petty larceny against a man, he might plead that it was a custom of the trade?—There is nothing to safeguard a man if an action were taken against him for petty larceny, although it was a custom of the trade.

120. Are you aware that in a part of this colony a man lost his employment because he carried away four small pieces of wood, and said it was the custom of the trade?—I am not aware of that case. I know, in connection with the Wellington Wharf, that men are allowed to take away some portions of the wood which is used in stowing cargo in the holds.

121. Have you known a case of a man in the boot trade losing his employment because he took off his boots and drove half a dozen nails in the soles, although it had been a custom of the trade and he did not know that that custom had been withdrawn?—I do not know of that case.

122. These are what you refer to as being customs of trade, without being provided for in the rules?—Yes; they are the custom amongst some employments.

*Mr. Collins :* In the baking trade we have a custom that the bakers should be allowed so many loaves a day. In Wellington the custom is to allow two loaves a day for other days and three loaves on Saturday. This practice had been in force for over five years; but on the last occasion on which a dispute was brought before the Arbitration Court the employers fought against it. I am pleased to say that Judge Cooper said it was an old custom, and that no exception could be taken to it.

123. Is it embodied in the award?—Yes.

124. Is it not a fact that where these customs prevail it is usual to make allowance for them in the wages?—I look upon them as something like half the wages. If an employee takes his loaves away it practically means that he is charged 3d. a loaf for his bread.