

SESSION II.
1906.
NEW ZEALAND.

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON WORKMEN'S INSURANCE

(NOTES ON THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Right Hon. the PREMIER.

No. 154.

SIR,— Westminster Chambers, 13 Victoria Street, London, S.W., 4th January, 1906.
Agreeably to your cabled instructions of August last I attended the seventh International Congress on Workmen's Insurance, which met at Vienna in September. The proceedings of the Congress occupied the week beginning the 17th September. Some forty official delegates were present, representing the more important of the civilised countries and some others. The delegate for the United Kingdom was Mr. D. Schloss, of the Board of Trade, and for the Commonwealth of Australia, Sir John Cockburn. To both of these gentlemen I am indebted for much courtesy and assistance. In addition to the official delegates, a large number of persons took part in the Congress, either as representatives of some unofficial society or simply on the ground of special knowledge or interest in workmen's insurance. The Viennese speakers and onlookers mustered strongly. On the whole, something like eight hundred persons must have taken some sort of part in the proceedings. I cannot say that this seemed to me to tend towards the advantage of orderly and businesslike discussion. Moreover, the direct outcome of the Conference must appear rather small. None of the official delegates were authorised by their Governments to agree to any important changes of policy. The direct conclusions, therefore, of the Conference may be said to have been almost confined to passing resolutions in favour of the unification of national statistics relating to workmen's insurance and accidents, and to the blessing of the labour treaty recently concluded between France and Italy. But it must not be supposed, because the direct outcome of the proceedings of such a meeting appears small, that important work is not effected by it. Many problems arising from the administration of insurance laws were discussed at length. Many of the papers and addresses put in or delivered at the Conference are of great value, embodying as they do the special knowledge of experts of high standing. Moreover, the interchange of views amongst these experts both at the meetings of such a Conference and unofficially behind the scenes must be of very great service to the cause of workmen's insurance in all countries, whether dealing with sickness, accidents, or old age. The progress made by protective and benevolent laws of this kind in many countries is already greater than is generally supposed. As this report indicates later on, there are already fourteen countries in which special statutes either make provision for the insurance of workmen or give them facilities for obtaining compensation for accident. In several countries both these ends are aimed at. So far as I can ascertain, no country in the world can yet claim to cover the same ground as the German Empire with its triple system of insurance against sickness, accidents, invalidity and old age. The progress, however, made in Austria, Denmark, Italy, and Belgium is marked and encouraging.

This memorandum is not so much an attempt at a formal summary of the proceedings of the Congress—the official report of which will reach you in due course—as a digest of notes on the present position of workmen's insurance, compensation, and pension laws in Germany, Austria, Great Britain, Denmark, and America, with some remarks on the question of international reciprocity. It is chiefly based on documentary information furnished to the Congress and examined there, or upon facts obtained by me either officially or otherwise. In addition to the various authorities mentioned within, I have made considerable use of the addresses delivered to the Congress by Dr. Von Bödiker, Councillor Cordt Trap, and Dr. Richard Freund, and of information given to me by the Austrian Organization Committee for the International Congress.

The Right Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

W. P. REEVES,