

this country. There is a consensus of opinion outside of the members of Parliament that I should represent this country at that Conference, and if members of Parliament are in accord with the proposition that New Zealand should be represented by the Prime Minister, and that the House should adjourn during his absence—

An Hon. MEMBER.—Will you put the two proposals separately?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I propose to ask that we should prorogue until the 30th September. I propose to ask that we should take supplies in the ordinary way, and that we should have our financial arrangements made for the purpose of carrying on our public works. I do not know of any minor matters at this moment that may require to be provided for, though there may be one or two to be considered in the event of its being decided that I should go.

Mr. MASSEY.—Are you going to take the opinion of this meeting?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I intend to take the opinion of this meeting.

Mr. MASSEY.—On the two questions separately?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I do not object to their being taken separately.

Mr. MASSEY.—You are going to propose them now?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—The resolution will be proposed presently.

Mr. MASSEY.—I think it would save time and would meet the convenience of honourable members present to-day if the resolutions were proposed forthwith in order to prevent discussion being duplicated.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—When I have finished speaking I will undertake to have a resolution proposed. I want now to point out what the position is in this matter of adjournment. It will mean a delay of about a month in submitting the Public Works Statement. If we had met at the ordinary time—that is, the last week in June—you would not have had the Public Works Statement before about the beginning of November, whereas if Parliament prorogues until the 30th September an effort will be made to have the Public Works Statement before the end of November. That is a safe way of putting it. But suppose it was the end of November, in any case it would be only about a month beyond the ordinary time for getting the Public Works Statement. In the natural course of things we should have to carry on our public works—such as railways, roads, and bridges for the requirements of the people of the country—without fresh authorisations by Parliament until the Public Works Statement came down in November. Now, if it is in the minds of any section of this House that there is going to be undue delay or interference with the work of the country in that respect, any such apprehension should be at once dismissed for the reason that, as is well known to the honourable members of the House who are familiar with the procedure here, the Government of the country, by taking a further authorisation, such as we would require to do for financial purposes and to obtain supplies, could carry on until Parliament gave us in the summer session a new authorisation to continue to the date to which we carry those works on. So that there is comparatively no dislocation in any way at all, nor was there any on the former occasion. But leaving that practical side of the matter for a moment, let me point out what it means as regards legislation. There are half a dozen very important questions that require to be dealt with during the next session of Parliament. I have no hesitation whatever in saying that that work can be done in the time at our disposal during the session of Parliament, even though a short one, in time for us to get home well before Christmas. Indeed, even if a vote of want of confidence were proposed, it could be dealt with, put out of the road, and the ordinary work of the session completed without any difficulty. Moreover, as honourable gentlemen may be aware, the great bulk of the legislation passed during any session of Parliament does not become law until the 1st January of the year following. From the point of view of carrying on the public-works expenditure there is but a short delay; and from the point of view of meeting the legislative requirements of the country this Dominion is not going to be one week behind through an adjournment till the end of September, because in any case the laws do not come into operation until the 1st January of the following year. There can be no such thing as an injury being done to the people in that respect. As already explained, even if we sat on from now, any measures passed would not become law until January. I feel satisfied that the Legislature can put through a reasonable session's work during the months of October, November, and part of December, because it has been done before, and we can do it again, and without difficulty. I desire to emphasize the fact that if we went right on our legislation would become effective only in January next—just the same time as if we passed it in November. I merely want to point this out to the honourable gentlemen who are present, so that when considering this important matter we may thoroughly understand where we are. I want to be frank, and I have asked my old friend the Hon. Mr. Duncan to move a resolution when I have concluded, because I do not think I should move the resolution myself, for the reason that I am presiding over this meeting, and in that respect the position is unique and somewhat peculiar. I thought it best not to ask any one to preside over honourable members, and I therefore asked Mr. Duncan if he would move the motion, and I will now make way for him to do so. In conclusion, let me say that I realise the inconvenience of the position just as well as honourable members, and I am sorry that it should have arisen. I want again to affirm the fact that the New Zealand Government is not responsible for the situation now before us—that is, for the date fixed for the Imperial Conference. It is obvious that the reason for holding it in July is that that is the time when the British Government are making up their proposed naval expenditure for submission to the House of Commons, and that is the reason, I should imagine, why the matter has been fixed for the end of July, although personally I should, of course, have preferred it being later; but we, as I have said, have had nothing to do with the time for calling the Imperial Conference together. I can only, in conclusion, thank the honourable gentlemen of both branches of the Legislature for their courtesy in coming here and for coming at considerable inconvenience to themselves. They will, I am sure, realise the difficult position in which the Government was placed owing to our inability to convene Parliament at an earlier date than the 10th instant. I have