

very different from what it is now. I am prepared to support a proposition, if the Prime Minister brings it down, for compulsory training in this country, to make every man capable of bearing arms a man qualified to defend this country in the event of the necessity arising. I am prepared to vote for a very substantial increase in the naval subsidy made towards the maintenance of the British navy. Are these matters of no importance? Then there is the question of land-settlement, of close land-settlement. There are thousands of men in New Zealand tramping from end to end of the Dominion, many of whom have been tramping it for years past, and they cannot get hold of the land that they require to enable them to earn a livelihood as farmers. The earth-hunger is very great, and nothing has been done to relieve it for some time past. But there are not only the questions of defence and of land-settlement; there is the question that has already been referred to, of the want of employment. This may not be a very great matter to us whose lines have fallen in pleasant places, but it is a very serious matter indeed to many people. Between here and Australia now there is a little army of men passing, who, having no capital or land, and not being able to sell their labour to private enterprise in New Zealand, have had to rake up what few pounds they possibly can, by the sale of their furniture, or borrow money to go to New South Wales to try to find employment there. Now, the Premier quoted Mr. Blatchford to-day, and I felt sorry, because I do not believe he agrees with Mr. Blatchford in any other single article of his political principles. Mr. Blatchford believes it is the duty of the State to find employment for every man in the State because he is a citizen, and has a right to be called upon to defend his country. Does the Premier indorse that? I should like an affirmative answer. Mr. Blatchford advocates socialism: the Premier does not, but denies the whole of Mr. Blatchford's political faith; but he uses his utterances in favour of what? It was in favour of military training, not in favour of giving Dreadnoughts; and I did not hear a word during the whole of the long speech of the Premier—not a syllable—that justified that spasmodic patriotism that has made us largely ridiculous in the eyes of the people outside New Zealand. As opposed to Blatchford the agnostic, here is the opinion of a leading Church dignitary—Cardinal Moran—who said he looked upon the proposal to give Dreadnoughts to England as “a piece of hysterical fanaticism, not to say folly.” I do not say that I attach much weight to that, but, as the Premier has quoted Mr. Blatchford, I quote Cardinal Moran, and could quote dozens who look upon the Dreadnought offer as unwise and unnecessary. The Premier declares that his presence at the Conference outweighs in importance anything we could be called upon to deal with in this country. I shall certainly oppose as far as I am able the closing-down of the business of the country while he is away. It is a reflection upon the Cabinet, and I believe, myself—I am not going to say that all the members of the Cabinet could carry on the business in the Premier's absence—but I do believe that there are at least two, if not more, members of the Cabinet who have had sufficiently long political experience, and whose ability is sufficient from any standpoint you like to judge it, to carry on the business of the country in the absence of the right honourable gentleman. It is a new Cabinet, but there are certainly two of the older parliamentarians now in the Cabinet who could carry on the business sufficiently well. And I believe, myself, that the Premier would have found, if he had agreed to the carrying-on of the business of the country in his absence, that the Opposition in this House would have extended every consideration and courtesy to the Cabinet in his absence. It was done when the late Mr. Seddon went Home. It is a notorious fact that remarkable courtesy and consideration was extended to the Cabinet during his absence, and the whole of the newspaper Press of New Zealand referred to it at the time. The question of local defence is of vast importance, and it should be dealt with now. The question of the unemployed is of great importance, and it should be dealt with now. The question of land-settlement is an important question that has no right to be delayed. And another question that has no right to be delayed is the question of finance. We have had a promise from the leader of the Government—it has been made on different platforms in New Zealand—that it is his intention to deal with the question of money-stringency, and that money-stringency is a very serious thing. There are many men in New Zealand who are seriously embarrassed by the high rates of interest that are now being charged. I believe that the whole question of the Advances to Settlers Department should be thoroughly discussed at the earliest possible date by the Parliament of this country, with the view to see whether or not there should be an extension of its operations so as to fill up the position that the banks apparently have failed to fill satisfactorily. All these are important matters; and, while I am quite willing to support the Premier's going Home, I am opposed to his absence necessitating the business of this country being paralysed for six months. There is no use telling us that if we start on the 1st October there is a chance of getting through the business of the country before Christmas.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Yes.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—The Premier is dangerously optimistic. It must be evident that there are a large number of important matters that must be shelved at the later sitting of Parliament owing to the Premier having been away. It may well happen, that it may be said when the Premier comes back that the question of finance, land-settlement, or local finance cannot be dealt with at that late period of the year. I can understand a short session, but I do not think there is a chance of getting the business of the country dealt with in an eight-weeks session commencing in October. No doubt it is very flattering to the pride of any man to take part in such a Conference, but after the way the Imperial Government went out of its way to explain that this will be only a subsidiary Conference, and in view of the fact that the other self-governing portions of the Empire are only sending their Defence or other Ministers, and in view of the fact that Australia proposes that one of its delegates shall be a senator, and that its Minister of Defence shall be the other delegate—the Prime Minister of Australia does not even suggest going, and the Prime Minister of Canada is not going—I believe that our Prime Minister might as well have allowed the High Commissioner to have represented New Zealand. By so doing he would have rendered a distinct service to New Zealand, because the business of Parliament could have gone on normally. I hope the first part