

liament never opened its doors. The Premier is giving colour to that statement by proposing to shut down Parliament for three months, and to take then a session half the usual length, and by saying that the country will in no wise suffer. In that respect I differ from him entirely. Even my own short experience has shown me that the work Parliament does is both important and necessary, and I recognise that we are facing a position such as this country has not faced for a great many years. I want to approach this question from a different point of view to that urged by other members. The Premier knows I have supported him heartily where it has seemed to me he has been acting on true Imperial lines. I shall continue to do that. I am glad to be a member of the party with which I sit; but at all times I shall support him, even in opposition to them, if I am satisfied that he is tackling affairs on truly Imperial lines. The Prime Minister of Australia said that Australia was willing to give her last man and her last penny in support of the defence of the Empire; and this sentiment is supported, I think I may say, by almost every man in New Zealand, and it devolves on the Government to do nothing whatever to cool this enthusiasm. But if it ever enters the minds of the people of this country that the Imperial sentiment is being used to call on them to make sacrifices which are unnecessary, you are in danger of so cooling the sentiment that you will find it very difficult to rekindle it. That is the danger before us. Let Imperialism make all the demands on us—the people and the Parliament—that it is justified in making, but beware of calling on our people to make sacrifices and carry burdens there is no need for them to bear.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Are you in favour of what the Government are doing?

Mr. MALCOLM.—I am not referring to the question of the Dreadnought, but to the adjournment of the House. I supported the right honourable gentleman in the Dreadnought offer the day I saw it had been made. But when on coming up to Dunedin I read those despatches in the *Otago Daily Times*, as disclosed by the Australian Government, I must say honestly I felt as if I had a cold douche. It seemed to me that I had to some extent been taken in. I thought affairs had assumed a very critical nature, and I took it for granted when the Premier made that magnificent offer he had information of a nature that specially entitled him to make an offer of such magnitude—an offer he was not warranted in making on strict constitutional lines. But when I saw these despatches I asked myself, "Was that all the reason there was for the offer?" and I began to doubt the Premier's justification. These despatches, I consider, did not justify him. I understand the despatches came after the offer was made. I listened to his speech this afternoon with that respect and attention I always pay to the Premier's speeches, and I take it that he had no confidential despatch or communication from the British Government whatever. I think I am right in saying that. I know he has refused to answer questions, otherwise I would ask him the question to give him an opportunity of answering it. I say again I believe he has had no confidential communication from the British Government. Then, where has he got the information from that he says he is unable to disclose? I am of opinion that he has very likely got a communication from, say, Lord Onslow, or Lord Ranfurly, or some other gentleman interested in politics at Home—

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—It is very unfair to name any one, because it might do them a great deal of injury.

Mr. MALCOLM.—This suspicion will from to-day's events be held by others. I have formed the opinion that he has received a confidential communication from an unofficial source; and the very fact that such an unworthy and, I say, ignoble use was made of New Zealand's offer by the party in opposition at Home confirms me in that suspicion. It appeared as if they had waited for New Zealand's offer to embarrass the Liberal Government, and it seems to me, if I am right in the conjecture I have made, that no Government in this country should receive any suggestion for action from unofficial sources at Home. That is the only way in which I can understand it. It appears the Government has received no advice of a confidential nature, and therefore that information must have come from other sources. I shall be happy to have it denied. If the Premier gave me the opportunity, I would ask him the question, in order that he might deny it. The Premier gave us no national grounds for adjourning the House. He was either unable or unwilling to show that the continued sitting of this Parliament would in any way whatever be injurious to the interests of the country. On the other hand, I doubt very much now whether even his own supporters do not recognise that the adjournment of the House will be to the injury of the country. Take, for instance, the question of compulsory military training alone. The Prime Minister is going Home chiefly on the question of the naval defence of the Empire. I hold that that question is of such importance as to entitle him to leave the Parliament of this country in order to go Home. It is going to be only a consultative Conference, and the decisions arrived at by that Conference cannot be put into effect until he comes back and consults this Parliament, and it passes legislation. That will take some time. But if the state of affairs is so critical as he wishes us to believe, what about our own defences here? For some sessions the leader of the Opposition has been strenuously supporting compulsory military training. I have heard the Premier, on the other hand, opposing it. It seems to me, if affairs are so critical as he has stated, it would be wise for us to continue sitting in the Premier's absence, in order to put our own defences into a proper state. We can do that immediately, and it should be done. The Premier has made the extraordinary statement that if he went Home and left Parliament sitting there is a possibility that he might be embarrassed by some resolution regarding Conference affairs being passed by this House. Well, really, I am astonished. I am quite satisfied if we sent him Home we would not in any way interfere with him, and the statement is such an extraordinary one that I can only suppose that it slipped from the Premier without his giving it due consideration. I can imagine if he went Home it might be of very considerable advantage to him if he could consult Parliament here. Some point might be sprung upon him of very great importance that he would not be justified in giving a conclusive opinion upon; but if he could cable to the gentleman acting in his place, and get this