

I do not know whether the right honourable gentleman meant it or not, but he certainly was misleading the House when he made that statement. Any old member of the House knows there are no grants authorised for expenditure until after the House rises. I remember one occasion on which the late Premier brought down the public-works estimates early in the session. Was that money expended one week earlier than the usual time? No; although members passed the estimates, the main portion of the grants were left for consideration on the supplementary estimates at the very end of the session. I do not know of a single instance in which any new grants for roads and bridges have been authorised for expenditure while Parliament was sitting. That means that if the session is put off for three months the public-works expenditure is put off for three months. We have urged in the past that Parliament should meet earlier in the year, for the main purpose of getting the estimates through, so that the expenditure of the public-works money might take place in the summer weather, because under the present system we cannot get to work until the winter is upon us, and if the session is postponed to three months later the position will be still worse. It will mean that we shall have lost practically a whole season so far as public works are concerned. There are a great many questions which I think should be dealt with at once. City members especially will agree that the question of the unemployed should be taken in hand immediately. Are we justified in putting that question off for three months? Then there is the question of the valuation of properties. I do not know whether it is the same in other parts of the Dominion, but I know that in the Auckland Province farm property has been put up from 50 to 100 per cent. What is the position? We have been told there is a fall in the price of wool and flax, and the position is that the farmers are called upon to pay 50 and 100 per cent. more in rates and taxes, while their incomes are less than they were under the former and lower valuation. I have always understood that taxation should be in proportion to what one was able to bear, and yet we find that these unfortunate farmers, although their earnings are greatly reduced, are paying, as I have said, from 50 to 100 per cent. more in rates and taxation. Then there is the question of the Advances to Settlers Department, and the rate of interest. This is a matter which requires alteration and amendment. I know that when the Bill was introduced we were told that it would regulate the rate of interest. We knew at the time that that was ridiculous, owing to the limited scope of the Department, and events have shown that we were right in our conclusions. The current rate of interest is now much above the departmental rate, and it is time something was done. It has been pointed out that there is little chance of getting money at the present time from the Advances to Settlers Department. I repeat that some amendment should be brought down giving larger powers under that Act. I understand that the rate of interest is 7 or 8 per cent. on good security now. Then there is the question of the Old-age Pension Act, which wants amendment. Owing to certain technicalities which require amendment many deserving cases of very old residents cannot be dealt with. It is quite possible under the present Act that an old person who has been in the Dominion for sixty years is unable to draw the pension only because of some break of four or five years' residence during the last twenty-five years of that period. Then there is the most important question of the settlement of our lands. There is no good in disguising the fact that some of our very best settlers are leaving the country at the present time; and these are the very class of people we want to retain here. They are young men who have had a thorough agricultural education, and yet they are leaving the Dominion. They are not leaving because they are disappointed with New Zealand, and because they do not like it; they are leaving simply because other countries and colonies are offering them facilities which they cannot get here in New Zealand. I hope that the Government will soon bring down such legislation as will do away with the leasehold system that was passed last Parliament. Let the people be in such a position that they can acquire the freehold. Then, there is another important question—that of the settlement of our Native lands. From the North of Auckland right down through the greater portion of the North Island there are thousands upon thousands of acres of Native land lying idle which the Natives are willing to dispose of, and settlers anxious to acquire, and yet the Government is standing in the way and will not allow the land to be settled. That, surely, is a matter that does not admit of delay. Then there is the question of suburban trains, which is a very burning question in Auckland. I maintain that the Government are not offering the facilities that they ought for people to live in the suburbs, and we are told when we approach the question that the trains do not pay, or that they cannot compete against the trams. My reply is that they cannot be expected to pay until there is a better service and better train accommodation. As a matter of fact, the trains should go first, and the population would follow. In the district I have the honour to represent a large number of people were on the point of buying land in the hope of being able to live a little farther out of town, because they anticipated that better railway facilities would be afforded; but they have been disappointed. They cannot be expected to buy land and build houses before they are sure of a suitable train service. Then there is the question of railway-construction. There is a great necessity for more railways being constructed in the North; and yet all these and other questions must stand over for a considerable time if the session is adjourned until October. The Right Hon. the Premier spoke about the public-works estimates being brought down early. If this can be done, as the Premier says, within a month after the meeting of next session, it could have been done in all past sessions. Surely this statement of the Premier's is a reflection on the administration of the Government in the past. I think that Parliament, instead of being put off for three months, ought to have been called together two or three months earlier. We have such important business to deal with that the Government would have been quite justified, instead of calling Parliament together on the 10th June, in convening it two months earlier, and finishing in good time, instead of putting its meeting back for another three months. I shall certainly vote against the postponement, and do everything that I possibly can to prevent the postponement of the session till the 30th September.