

year had some seven hundred men actually at work, while there were some eleven hundred names on the books; now the number at work is a hundred and sixty. There has been such a drop in the time I mention. And you can go through the different trades and occupations—carpenters, painters, and trades and occupations of all kinds—and you will find that the position pretty well throughout is about the same. So that I do not think I am in the least overstating the position or giving in any sense a false estimate when I say in Wellington alone there are fully a thousand men out of work. And that does not take into consideration the many hundreds who are being called upon to live on a wage of from £1 to £1 5s. a week. I know this. I am not speaking of what I have been told. I am not speaking from information I have got out of any Department. I see the men drawing their money week after week, and I know just what they get. And I want to say here to-night that if the Premier takes his information as to the state of the labour-market from the reports of the Labour Department, then he only gets information respecting those who apply to the Labour Department. We know that after men go there two or three times they get heart-sick, and, probably having a wife and children suffering at home, they will not waste their time in going back again. I know that illustrates to some extent the difference between the Premier's statistics and those of the member for Christchurch North with regard to the conditions in Christchurch. But I get the information right up and down the country that there are large bodies of men out of work in Auckland, in Taranaki, and in almost every district that you can name. And I submit that it is of very vital importance to the mass of the people of this country that this problem should be faced, and that as speedily as possible. I think the Right Hon. the Premier treated the matter altogether too lightly when he stated that if the House would adjourn the business might be taken up in September. He said that the Public Works Statement and the estimates could be brought down in November, and that honourable members might get home to their Christmas puddings. The masses of the people are not now thinking of their Christmas puddings; they are wondering where they will get their dinners from next week.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I made no remark about Christmas puddings. You should not put words into my mouth that I have not used.

Mr. McLAREN.—Then you mentioned Christmas dinner.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—No; I made no such statement.

Mr. McLAREN.—Very well; I acknowledge that I am in error in that quotation. The Premier did say that honourable members might be home before Christmas. The exact words is a matter of no importance. It was followed up by other speakers, who, I think, put the Christmas-pudding construction on it. I submit that this is not merely a matter of defending our country on the lines of militarism or along the lines of naval expenditure; but there is also the economic side of defending our country by providing the means for defence, because if Sir Edward Grey's statement is correct—and I think that we must take it as such—if it is correct, I say the nations cannot go on continuously piling up burdens of expense in this way unless we are going to keep our peoples fully employed, and thus create the necessary wealth for this immense expenditure. I submit that the question of filling up our vacant lands, the question of carrying on the works of the country, and the questions that have been referred to generally with respect to our economic developments—these all have a distinct relation to the question of defence, and we cannot carry out any proper system of defending either this country or the British Empire unless due attention is paid to these matters. Now, I want to say here that it appeared to me that the Right Hon. the Premier rejoiced unduly at the news which he had received—namely, that the new Commonwealth Government had followed what I consider to have been a very bad example on his part. Let me say that I should have been very much better pleased had the previous Government retained office, and carried out its policy of defence on the lines of sober and wise statesmanship which were being pursued by the Hon. Mr. Fisher. On the question of the offer made by the Premier of a Dreadnought, or two if necessary, it appeared to me that there the Premier was seeking to illustrate the value of the statement that "the end justifies the means." It is a doctrine that I cannot at any time agree to. The end does not justify the means if the means adopted is an attack upon the liberties—the constitutional liberties—of the people; and I say that the proper representation of the people in Parliament assembled is the only real protection that the mass of the people have got. It is the only proper protection they have in respect to how they shall be saddled with taxation and how their moneys shall be spent. And when the Premier put it to us to-day that if Parliament had been called together there might have been a difference of opinion, and there might have been some stir, and something of what he described as "the moral effect" would have been lost, I think he was relying too much upon the game of bluff, because I believe that if the impression to be conveyed to Germany or any other foreign nation was that the Dominion of New Zealand and the other colonies were standing closely with the Mother-country, then it seems to me that it would have had all the more powerful an effect if it had been a result of the clear judgment of Parliament instead of merely the decision of the Government. I have looked at this matter of representation at the coming Conference in this way: that the real reason for the Conference being called was that it was evident there was divergence of policy in the lines being taken by different colonies. Canada, for instance, was taking one line with regard to naval defence, and this Dominion was disposed to take another line; and I think that the Imperial statesmen therefore saw the necessity of bringing the representatives of the colonies together with the representatives of the Home Government, so that if possible some common principles might be adopted running through the whole plan of Imperial defence. I think that is the reason why this Conference has been called. The Conference being of a purely consultative character, and there having been no Order Paper submitted to us so that we might in any way instruct our representative at the Conference, I quite agreed with sending the Premier Home to represent the Dominion, for the reason that I thought a responsible Minister should go there—one who is responsible to the whole country. I want to