

then went back to England. That is what he writes to me after about two or three hours' acquaintance. It shows that the feeling with which the people at Home received our offer of a Dreadnought is different from the feeling which has been expressed in some of the speeches made here to-night. I feel that in this matter Sir Joseph Ward should be supported by every member of the Opposition. Some honourable gentlemen have referred to-night to this offer costing the colony possibly about £180,000 a year. I have not seen an official computation made how the cost of the Dreadnought is to be met.

An Hon. MEMBER.—That is not the question.

Mr. BROWN.—“That is not the question.” I quite agree with you, and I am perhaps traversing ground that is not altogether pertinent to the point, but I think it is very easy to defray the cost of a Dreadnought if the House will only go the proper way about it. If the House will unlock a couple of million acres of this Native land we have heard so much about to-night, and let the revenue go to pay the cost of the Dreadnought, it will benefit the Old Country and also this country. We have heard a great deal about this Native land being unlocked and settled on. We know that there is more settlement wanted, and there is one way out of the difficulty as simple as A B C. When the Dreadnoughts are to be paid for the Government will have to face the position, and I have made a suggestion that is worthy of consideration as to how the money shall be raised. I come from a part of the country where this Native-land question has been the cause of a great deal of trouble. We have suffered for many years through the Native legislation. I think everybody will admit that. The southern people have not suffered in the way we have. There are peculiar circumstances why we have suffered which I cannot explain, but when it comes to the cost of building the Dreadnoughts there is a very simple way out of the difficulty. It is a good object, and I think every one is loyal enough to our country even to selling our clothes; and sacrifices are sometimes required. We know what the French people did at the time of the Franco-Prussian war: they sold their jewellery and stripped themselves of everything they had to pay the indemnity, and did their duty. But we do not want to have to do that. We want to stop war coming, and to check the country that may be the aggressor, and the way we have got to check it is to build not only one or two Dreadnoughts, but more if risk to the Empire calls for that course. I think the English people in postponing this Conference have paid us a great honour, as it was postponed to enable Sir Joseph Ward to go Home, and I think every honourable gentleman ought to regard the invitation as a great honour. I feel as an Englishman that we should do what we can to show our regard for the Old Land. I am not a military man at all, but I was born on the 18th June, and I am always proud of the 18th June, the date upon which the Prime Minister will leave Wellington for London to attend the epoch-making Conference convened by the Imperial Government. We ought all to be proud of that date, and we ought to do all we can in the future to assist the English people, who are doing everything they possibly can to defend the Empire. The argument was used by Mr. Lang in regard to the Public Works Statement having been brought down earlier on some occasion, and he used that as an argument why the House should not prorogue. The honourable gentleman said that although the Public Works Statement had been brought down not one single shilling had been spent earlier. Well, I think that argument is in favour of the House proroguing. Mr. Luke and others referred to the depression of the labour-market and the consequent distress. Well, we have had a drop in the price of our principal products, such as frozen meat, wool, and flax, and we have had to suffer accordingly. We all know that when any depression comes about the working-men feel it more than anybody else, because they are dependent on their daily labour for their bread. I sympathize with the workman, and so, I am sure, does every member, because we all feel that the prosperity of the country is good for every one. I suppose there is not a member of this House, whether he is a labour member or any one else, who wants to see anybody out of work, and I do not think we can blame the Premier for the want of work, or conclude that there will be more men out of work if this House prorogues. I do not intend to detain the House at this late hour, but I felt that I ought to give expression to my ideas on this question, and I have done so. I hope now that the Opposition, in spite of all they have said, will agree to adjourn, and vote unanimously that the House should be prorogued.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR (Christchurch North).—I have a letter which has come into my hands since this debate commenced, and one which I think is of sufficient importance to read to the meeting. It is as follows:—

“Antico Street, Wellington, 7th June, 1909.

“DEAR SIR,—I have been directed by my union to forward to you for your very favourable consideration and support the following resolution, which was passed unanimously by a very large meeting of members of the above union held last Saturday evening:—

“That this union, whilst recognising the necessity of the impending Imperial Defence Conference and the desirableness of New Zealand being adequately represented, urges members of Parliament to take into consideration the far-reaching effect of the proposed adjournment of the winter session on the industrial class. The large number of wage-earners who find employment during the sitting of Parliament will be thrust on the present abnormal unemployed market, and wives and children who are now suffering from want and hardships (due to the general monetary depression) will be further cruelly penalised during the severity of winter.

“If Parliament adjourns for three months then many tradesmen in the Government Printing Office will lose their employment, and others will not get that employment that a session of Parliament usually brings them, and which has been looked forward to with the hope of securing work to tide them over the winter and to pay arrears of indebtedness incurred through lack of employment. Those affected in the Printing Office are letterpress machinists, bookbinders, compositors, &c. Then, there are messengers and sessional waiters, &c., who would also be affected.”

“Trusting the above will receive your favourable consideration,—I remain, yours faithfully,
“J. W. F. McDougall, Secretary.”