

1909.
NEW ZEALAND.

IMPERIAL NAVAL CONFERENCE

(PROCEEDINGS OF INFORMAL MEETING OF MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ON THE QUESTION OF THE REPRESENTATION OF NEW ZEALAND AT THE).

Laid on the Table by the Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward, with the leave of the House.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

A CONFERENCE of members of Parliament was held in the Parliament Buildings on Monday, the 7th June, 1909, in response to an invitation issued by the Prime Minister, the Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward, in the following terms:—

“On the 2nd day of April last His Excellency prorogued Parliament by Proclamation until the 10th June proximo. Since then circumstances of grave Imperial importance have arisen involving urgent consideration of questions of naval defence, and the Imperial Government has communicated to me through His Excellency the Governor an invitation to be present at a Conference in London convened with a view to discussing these questions.

“I am informed that this Conference cannot be held later than the last week in July; hence, if I am to attend it, I must be prepared to leave New Zealand about the middle of June. In my judgment, it is essential that the wish and will of members of Parliament be known by me before giving the Imperial Government a definite reply.

“In the ordinary course I should have asked His Excellency to summon Parliament for an earlier date than now fixed, but I am advised by the Crown Law Officers that there is no provision in New Zealand by which this can be done. In England Parliament can be summoned at any time by Proclamation on giving six days' notice, although a later date has already been fixed for its meeting. This power I am advised, however, is not possessed by the Governor of New Zealand.

“In these circumstances I am compelled to adopt an expedient not without precedent in English-speaking countries, of inviting the members of Parliament to meet informally upon an earlier date than that now fixed for the formal opening of the session. Accordingly, I now ask you to be good enough to meet me on Monday, the 7th June next, at three o'clock p.m., at Parliament Buildings. I have sent a similar invitation to every member of both Houses, and I shall take the opportunity of laying before members, when assembled, a full statement of the reasons which in my opinion render this course necessary, and justify the urgency which underlies it.

“I have taken this step the more readily because I believe all members recognise that the question of Imperial defence is one that rises above mere party interests or party differences, and that members at the meeting I have so convened will approach the consideration of the questions that will be submitted to them in a spirit of broad-minded and impartial patriotism. I may add, in further explanation of the course I am now taking, that the preliminaries which must this session precede any public business would in ordinary circumstances probably so long delay my ascertaining the will of Parliament upon the questions I have outlined as to render my attendance at the Conference impossible.

“J. G. WARD.”

The following members of Parliament attended:—

Mr. J. Allen (Bruce), Mr. G. J. Anderson (Mataura), Mr. J. F. Arnold (Dunedin Central), Mr. F. E. Baume, K.C. (Auckland East), Mr. J. Bollard (Eden), Mr. J. V. Brown (Napier), Mr. W. C. Buchanan (Wairarapa), Hon. D. Buddo (Minister of Internal Affairs), Mr. D. Buick (Palmerston), Mr. T. Buxton (Geraldine), Hon. J. Carroll (Native Minister), Mr. E. H. Clark (Chalmers), Mr. J. Colvin (Buller), Mr. J. Craigie (Timaru), Mr. T. H. Davey (Christchurch East), Mr. A. Dillon (Hawke's Bay), Mr. B. Dive (Egmont), Hon. T. Duncan (Oamaru), Mr. J. Duncan (Wairau), Mr. H. G. Ell (Christchurch South), Mr. W. H. Field (Otaki), Mr. F. M. B. Fisher (Wellington Central), Mr. G. W. Forbes (Hurunui), Hon. G. Fowlds (Minister of Education), Mr. W. Fraser (Wakatipu), Mr. J. Graham (Nelson), Mr. H. J. Greenslade (Waikato),

Hon. A. R. Guinness (Grey), Mr. D. H. Guthrie (Oroua), Mr. C. Hall (Waipawa), Mr. J. A. Hanan (Invercargill), Mr. C. A. C. Hardy (Selwyn), Mr. A. L. Herdman (Wellington North), Mr. J. B. Hine (Stratford), Mr. J. T. Hogan (Wanganui), Hon. A. W. Hogg (Minister of Labour), Mr. W. T. Jennings (Taumarunui), Mr. F. W. Lang (Manukau), Mr. G. Laurenson (Lyttelton), Mr. F. Lawry (Parnell), Mr. J. P. Luke (Wellington Suburbs), Mr. W. D. S. Macdonald (Bay of Plenty), Hon. R. McKenzie (Minister of Public Works), Hon. T. Mackenzie (Minister of Agriculture), Mr. D. McLaren (Wellington East), Mr. A. S. Malcolm (Clutha), Mr. F. Mander (Marsden), Mr. W. F. Massey (Franklin), Hon. J. A. Millar (Minister of Railways), Hon. A. T. Ngata (Minister representing Native race), Mr. E. Newman (Manawatu), Mr. W. Nosworthy (Ashburton), Mr. H. J. H. Okey (Taranaki), Mr. T. Parata (Southern Maori), Mr. G. V. Pearce (Patea), Mr. L. R. Phillipps (Waitemata), Mr. H. Poland (Ohinemuri), Mr. C. H. Poole (Auckland West), Mr. V. H. Reed (Bay of Islands), Mr. A. E. Remington (Rangitikei), Mr. R. H. Rhodes (Elsmere), Mr. R. B. Ross (Pahiatua), Mr. G. W. Russell (Avon), Mr. R. Scott (Tuapeka), Mr. T. E. Y. Seddon (Westland), Mr. T. K. Sidey (Dunedin South), Mr. J. Stallworthy (Kaipara), Mr. E. H. Taylor (Thames), Mr. T. E. Taylor (Christchurch North), Dr. Te Rangihiroa (Northern Maori), Mr. G. M. Thomson (Dunedin North), Mr. J. C. Thomson (Wallace), Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward, K.C.M.G., P.C. (Prime Minister), Mr. T. M. Wilford (Hutt), Mr. G. Witty (Riccarton), Mr. R. A. Wright (Wellington South).

The members assembled in the chamber of the House of Representatives at three o'clock p.m.

The members of the Legislative Council were also present, but took no part in the proceedings.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD (Prime Minister).—Gentlemen, I propose before proceeding to intimate to the House what course I think would be convenient to honourable members to pursue under very difficult and unique circumstances; and in doing so I want to ask the co-operation of members of the House, with a view, if possible, to giving effect to what the law of the country, so far as the convening of Parliament before a prorogation, has upon this occasion prevented being done. I invited the members of both branches of the Legislature to meet in Wellington to enable the position to be placed before them for their consideration, and they will see before I have concluded that it is the only way in which it was possible for this to have been done. I want to thank the members of both branches of the Legislature for their kindness in coming on my invitation; and I desire to say that, while I am sure the members of the Lower House who are assembled will be glad of the opportunity for members of the Legislative Council to hear the discussion, I hope that those gentlemen belonging to the other Chamber who have also so kindly responded to the invitation to be present will, after the conclusion of the proceedings, consider the matter in their own chamber. This I hope because I feel the responsibility upon me, in the absence of a meeting of Parliament in the ordinary way, is such that one ought to have an expression of opinion from both branches of the Legislature. It is convenient for the members of both Houses to be here as they are, as I desire to make a statement in the presence of the occupants of both chambers. I am not going to ask that a chairman should be appointed for the conduct of the proceedings. I say this advisedly, for the reason that members have responded to an invitation sent to them by me to meet me here, and I propose for that reason to preside over the assembly and to put any resolution that any honourable gentleman during the course of the proceedings desires should be put. Members will recognise that they are here quite voluntarily, and in the only way that I could possibly ask them to meet me—namely, by invitation—and for that reason it seems to me, after carefully thinking the matter over, that the course I am suggesting, of presiding myself, is one that will commend itself to members generally. It is, I am certain, the most convenient one for the purpose. Now, having thanked the members of the Legislature for their attendance, I desire to explain the reason for the unusual course that is being followed. The law in New Zealand, unlike the British law, does not admit of Parliament being called together in an emergency of any kind antecedent to the date of prorogation, and the prorogation was fixed for the 10th June. Circumstances arose that required the Government to ascertain, if possible, the feelings and views of honourable members before that date, but under the laws of the country it was impossible to convene Parliament earlier. I may say I think that the law affecting this requires to be amended. I therefore convened the present meeting in a way which, though unusual, has been followed in other British countries. If, as I have said, it had been possible under our law to call Parliament together earlier it would have been done. I also desire to say that I have all along felt that these proceedings should not only be published in the Press, but that a record should also be taken of them by the *Hansard* staff, so that later on, after Parliament has assembled, the presentation of the report of the proceedings may be made to Parliament in the shape of a parliamentary paper for record purposes and for the future use of members. This course will, I am sure, commend itself to the members who are present. I also want, as a matter of courtesy to the leader of the Opposition, whom I am very pleased to see here, to say that upon an occasion of this kind a difficulty presented itself so far as the ordinary etiquette between leaders is concerned. I wish to refer for a moment to this. I notice the honourable gentleman has referred to the fact that he had received no intimation or communication from me. I desire to say I am anxious to the fullest extent to in every way recognise the responsible position occupied by the leader of the Opposition in this country, and my wish is to extend to him the courtesy due to him in his position as leader of his party. A pronouncement was, however, definitely made by him on an important matter of an affirmative character, or rather of a negative character, to the effect that he was opposed to the prorogation of Parliament, and, if Parliament sat, my place was in the House. With the latter portion of his statement I agree; but what he publicly said placed it beyond me to discuss the matter with him except on the assumption that I was soliciting the honourable gentleman to change his views. That, of course, I am not prepared to do. He has himself made a difficulty in this respect which necessitates my referring to it as I am now doing. In connection with the procedure to-day, had it

been possible to arrange anything in consultation with him I should have been glad to have conferred with him, and asked his co-operation, if possible, to fix upon a definite course. Realising as I do that, except with the good will of members, however much some may differ with me, there must be a general informal decision of all members, I thought it right to come and make a statement to them, and ask members to consider the question fully for themselves. The cause of our assembling is well known to every one who is here. The cause is beyond the control of the Government of this country. We are not, either directly or indirectly, responsible in any way for the convening of a Naval Conference in England. We neither suggested it nor were we consulted about it prior to the Conference being announced. The causes, therefore, that have arisen which call for the Government ascertaining the views of members of Parliament in New Zealand are entirely beyond our control. No one can blame the Government for the position that has arisen, and it is upon this position that the Government requires to have an indication of the views of members of Parliament before we can, as under ordinary circumstances we should, submit for the consideration of His Excellency the Governor the outlines of a Speech from the Throne to be delivered upon the meeting of Parliament. If, as the outcome of an expression of opinion on the part of the members present, a decision is arrived at that New Zealand is to be represented at the Imperial Conference, and if that representation is to be by the Prime Minister, and if the House is to adjourn owing to his attendance at this Conference—if that position is arrived at by this meeting, obviously, then, it will be apparent to every honourable member that the Government should of necessity submit to His Excellency the Governor the outlines of a Speech from the Throne, intimating to Parliament the actual causes for a short session, and the provision required for the financial arrangements to enable the public business of the country to be carried on. Provision for supply in the usual way would require to be made, an increase in the "unauthorised expenditure" approved, and there we would stop. If it were decided that the country wished to be represented at the Imperial Conference, and that representation was to be by the Prime Minister, a short Speech from the Throne of that nature would comply with the constitutional position, and fill the conditions that are essential. On the other hand, if the House in its judgment decides that the Dominion ought not to be represented at the Imperial Conference by the head of the Government, that there ought not to be an adjournment of Parliament, then honourable members will see that we would require to advise his Excellency in a different direction altogether, the Speech from the Throne embodying as it would do a general sketch of the legislation to be submitted and to be considered during the full session of Parliament. We are in the position at the present moment that if we were to submit the shorter Speech to which I have alluded, and it was decided there should be no prorogation of Parliament, as there would not be under ordinary circumstances, then we would be blamed—and rightly so—for not having outlined for the members of Parliament that business which we proposed to submit to them to go on with during the course of the session. That is one of the difficulties that presents itself. Another is, in the event of the Parliament of the country deciding in its wisdom that we are to be represented at the Imperial Conference at the time fixed by the British Government, then it becomes necessary to have a short sitting of Parliament to enable that decision to be complied with. The Government is in the position that, if we refuse to respond to the invitation to be represented at this important Conference, we would lay ourselves open—and rightly so—to a charge of indifference to being represented at what is generally understood to be an epoch in the history of the British Empire. If we refuse, on the one hand, to respond to the invitation of the British Parliament—and we are not in a position to do so at the moment until we have the opinion of the members voiced by them or recorded by them—we would be blamable. On the other hand, we cannot accept until we know what is the decision of the members of Parliament.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—How did Australia deal with it in the absence of Parliament?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I want to be courteous to the honourable gentleman. It is, however, very important that I should be allowed to make my statement complete.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—It is a fair and proper question to ask.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—The honourable gentleman will recognise that I have an important task in hand, and I think I should be allowed to first complete it.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—Very well. I will ask it later on.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Considering that the matter is a very important one, I would like in consecutive order to state what I have to say. I will endeavour to be as brief as I can.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—I will ask the question later on, then.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I have no objection whatever to that. The position being as I have stated, I consider it is due to honourable members that I should put on record what has been done in connection with this matter; and I want to try and make the position clear on one point. I think to-day it would be not only inopportune, but unfair, to ask for an affirmation or a contrary decision upon the Government's proposal of the offer of a Dreadnought, or two, to the British Government, and I propose to ask Parliament, when Parliament is assembled, to arrive at a decision upon that question—as to the action of the Government on that matter. I am not on the present occasion seeking to obtain from the members, before the meeting of Parliament, their views on that matter, because I recognise that that is the right of Parliament, and that Parliament itself should affirm, or otherwise, as it thinks proper, its opinion on the proposal that the Government has made in that respect. But it is to the facts as I have already conveyed them to honourable members that we require to give the necessary consideration. I refer to the Imperial Conference. In the course of my remarks to-day you will see that from the information conveyed by the British Government, especially relative to a despatch which they announced was to be here, and which in the ordinary course should have been here before now, but which has not yet reached the Governor, and consequently not reached the Government, that it is quite clear that the British Government

are awaiting the outcome of the conference before that despatch can be conveyed to the Government of New Zealand. Consequently, the New Zealand Parliament, in the absence of the despatch referred to, or the result of the conference subsequently convened, will not be in the position to deal with the matter which the British Government have put on record that they intend to carry out, until either the despatch has been received, or, in the alternative, the important and difficult questions to be discussed at the Imperial Conference have been fully considered. While I am not going to ask the members of Parliament who are present to consider the Government's offer of a Dreadnought to the British Government, it does become necessary for me to put on record in sequence the despatches connected therewith, and I propose to do so from the start, so that honourable members, not only to-day, but when Parliament meets, shall have before them the position in detail so far as the Government is concerned. I commence by reading a memorandum sent by me, dated the 20th March last, to my colleagues on this important matter:—

“ Prime Minister's Office, Wellington, 20th March, 1909.

“ Memo. for Cabinet.

“ THERE is at the present moment a crisis in the affairs of the Empire. The cables recently published regarding the keeping of the British navy up to a standard that will insure the safety of all parts of the Empire are of a most disquieting nature. So much so that I feel that the time has arrived when New Zealand should do something more than it is now doing to show its practical assistance and support of the British navy in such a way that the moral effect of New Zealand's co-operation would, quite irrespective of the money value, be of more than ordinary moment.

“ We are now under an agreement to pay £100,000 a year as a contribution to the British navy. This is doubtless in the ordinary sense a large sum, but is comparatively small when the tremendous interests at stake are considered, and is nothing approaching what we are reasonably and fairly expected to contribute to help the Old Land to maintain that which is essential for their and our welfare also—namely, the supremacy of the sea—and which, in my opinion, can only be insured by her having a greatly superior fleet of battleships to that of any other Power.

“ For your consideration I propose that we should offer to the British Government at least one, and, if necessary, two first-class battleships of the Dreadnought or latest types, and that the offer should be on behalf of New Zealand and at our own cost; the battleships to be controlled both in peace and war time absolutely by the British Admiralty.

“ If the offer is accepted by the British Government, we must, of course, ask Parliament for authority to raise a special loan, and, in addition, to provide interest upon the amount required for a sinking fund of 1 per cent. for the redemption of the loan. At the outside, the cost of each of the battleships would be two millions, probably one and three-quarter million each, but in estimating the position I take the former amount as the approximate cost. I have no doubt in my own mind that for such a purpose we could obtain a loan at a rate of 3 per cent., which, with 1 per cent. sinking fund, would amount, if the battleships cost the full sum of £2,000,000, to £80,000 per annum for one, and if two were obtained to £160,000 per annum; so that, summed up from the standpoint of the cost to the people of New Zealand, the amount is not large, and if considered as an insurance premium upon the value of the national estate, to say nothing of the value of the private estate of the people and the keeping open sea routes for the safe conveyance of our produce, is anything but a large sum to pay in return for helping to support in a practical way the British navy, which much be recognised by all as giving us a protection and support against other countries that is really invaluable.

“ By following the course I am suggesting we would in a most practical and substantial way demonstrate to any opposing nation of the British Empire that not only have they to count upon the magnificent work the Old Land in this respect has done in the past by building and maintaining a powerful and unequalled navy—and will, I am confident, continue to do so in the future—but will also have to reckon in addition the loyal adherence and the practical assistance of her sons in her oversea dominions, and the moral effect of this undertaking would, in my opinion, have a great and far-reaching influence. It would proclaim to the world that the oversea dominions, gradually growing into nationhood, were prepared to help to preserve the power and greatness of the Empire which for the best part of a century, at comparatively no cost to us, has given us that protection without which that independence and security to our commerce under the British flag would have been impossible in the absence of the British navy.

“ Whatever is done should be done at once, and if Cabinet agrees to my proposal I would transmit it through the Governor to the British Government without delay. The responsibility devolving upon the Government in taking this action is a great one, the refusal of Parliament to sanction it involving as it would the retirement of the Government or an appeal to the people; but I feel confident that the loyalty of the people of New Zealand, voicing itself through their representatives in Parliament, will indorse the action of the Government.

“ The situation in England to-day is one of tension and serious apprehension, and both in the eyes of England and in the eyes of Europe a prompt and generous assistance would have, in addition to its material value, a moral effect which cannot be overestimated.

“ J. G. WARD.”

That memorandum was submitted on the 22nd March to Cabinet, at which there was a full meeting, with the exception of the member representing the Maori race in the Executive Council. At that full meeting the following decision was, after consideration, arrived at unanimously:—

“ In Cabinet, 22nd March, 1909.

“ The Government to offer to defray the cost of the immediate building and arming of one first-class battleship of the latest type, and, if subsequent events show it to be necessary, will provide the cost of a second war-ship of the same type.

“ J. HISLOP,
Acting-Secretary.”

On the same day the following telegram was sent by me to His Excellency the Governor at Woodville:—

“Wellington, 22nd March, 1909.

“His Excellency the Governor, Woodville.

“THE Prime Minister presents his compliments to His Excellency the Governor, and desires that the following cable be sent to the Secretary of State for the Colonies—begins: ‘The New Zealand Government offers to defray the cost of the immediate building and arming by the British Government of one first-class battleship of the latest type, and, if subsequent events show it to be necessary, will also provide the cost of a second war-ship of the same type.’

“J. G. WARD.”

At the same time the following telegram was also sent to His Excellency:—

“Wellington, 22nd March, 1909.

“His Excellency the Governor, Woodville.

“I FEEL sure that in sending telegram *re* Government’s offer of a battleship Your Excellency will be pleased to know that upon the proposal being submitted by me to Cabinet it received the unanimous indorsement of my colleagues. In advising the Home authorities, I shall be glad if your Excellency will kindly intimate that the New Zealand Government must, of course, obtain ratification of Parliament, and such legislation as may be required to make the gift effective, and that in the meantime any advance necessary for the building of the war-ship will no doubt be made by the British Government, and any money which the British Government so expends before Parliament meets will be taken over as part of our contribution.

“J. G. WARD.”

On the same day I received the following telegram from His Excellency:—

“Kaikoura North, 22nd March, 1909.

“The Right Hon. the Prime Minister, Wellington.

“HAVE received with pride and satisfaction your telegram regarding New Zealand Government offer to Imperial Government to defray cost of battleship or battleships, and have this day cabled accordingly to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

“PLUNKET.”

The following is a cablegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to His Excellency the Governor:—

“His Excellency the Governor, Wellington.

“London, 23rd March, 1909.

“PLEASE hasten to assure your Prime Minister that his message has been received by me with the highest appreciation of the generous and spontaneous offer made on behalf of New Zealand. It will be at once laid before His Majesty’s Government.

“CREWE.”

The following is a cablegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to His Excellency the Governor:—

“His Excellency the Governor, Wellington.

“London, 24th March, 1909.

“I AM commanded by His Majesty the King to inform you that His Majesty is deeply gratified by the patriotic feeling displayed by New Zealand towards Mother-country in their splendid offer, and to convey at once his gratitude and high appreciation for fine patriotism and generosity shown in the magnificent offer made so promptly and spontaneously.

“CREWE.”

The following is a telegram from the Prime Minister to His Excellency the Governor at Opotiki:—

“His Excellency the Governor, Opotiki.

“Wellington, 26th March, 1909.

“SIR JOSEPH WARD presents his compliments to His Excellency the Governor, and acknowledges the receipt of the telegram of twenty-fourth March forwarded by Secretary of State for the Colonies conveying the message from His Majesty the King. He will be glad if His Excellency will be good enough to convey through the Secretary of State to His Majesty the King the New Zealand Government’s deep sense of gratitude for the gracious message, and for His Majesty’s generous recognition of New Zealand’s offer of a war-ship to the Mother-country. The people of New Zealand are pleased to evince in a tangible way their loyalty to the King to help in maintaining the strength of the Empire.

“J. G. WARD.”

This is a telegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to His Excellency the Governor:—

“His Excellency the Governor, Wellington.

“London, 24th March, 1909.

“IN further reply your telegram 22nd March, desire you to express to Sir Joseph Ward and to your Government in the warmest terms the feeling of appreciation and gratitude with which His Majesty’s Government have received the offer so generously made. In view of the uncertainty that exists as to the character and extent of the demand which may be made on the national resources in the following year, the offer of the Government of New Zealand to bear within that period the cost of providing one first-class battleship of the latest type, and of a second of the same type should subsequent events show it to be necessary, is most gratefully accepted by His Majesty’s Government. Your Government will doubtless understand that it is impossible to enter into details by telegram, but you will receive at an early date full communication by despatch, as His Majesty’s Government desires to consult with the Government of New Zealand as to time it may become appropriate to give effect to their public-spirited proposal. So far as the coming financial year is concerned, the provisions and powers for which sanction is being asked in the Naval estimates now before Parliament affords ample security.

“CREWE.”

Telegram from the Prime Minister to His Excellency the Governor, Opotiki :—

“His Excellency the Governor, Opotiki.

“Wellington, 26th March, 1909.

“THE Prime Minister presents his compliments to his Excellency the Governor, and acknowledges receipt of the telegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies of 24th instant, and would be glad if he would send the following reply to the Secretary of State—begins : ‘The Government and people of New Zealand are much gratified at acceptance of their offer. Their sole desire is to assist the Empire, as far as New Zealand’s resources permit, in maintaining its naval supremacy. They feel that the Imperial Government can best determine what shape and time of contribution will best effect that end, and therefore, as desired by the Imperial Government, the New Zealand Government will await details in despatch.

“J. G. WARD.”

The following telegram is from His Excellency the Governor to the Right Hon. the Prime Minister, Wellington.

“The Right Hon. the Prime Minister, Wellington.

“Kawhia, 3rd May, 1909.

“THE Governor has received the following telegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, dated London, 30th April :—

“The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, President of the Imperial Conference, has desired me to ask you to convey the following message to the Prime Minister. Message begins : ‘It will no doubt be within your knowledge that on the 29th March the Canadian House of Commons passed a resolution to the following effect.’ Resolution begins : ‘Resolutions of the Canadian House of Commons, March 29th, 1909. That this House fully recognises the duty of the people of Canada and their increase in numbers and wealth to assume in larger measure the responsibilities of national defence. The House is of opinion that under present constitutional relations between the Mother-country and the self-governing dominions the payment of regular and periodical contribution to the Imperial Treasury for naval and military purposes it will not, so far as Canada is concerned, be the most satisfactory solution of the question of defence. The House will cordially approve of any necessary expenditure designed to promote the speedy organization of a Canadian naval service in co-operation with and in close relation to the Imperial navy, along the lines suggested by the Admiralty at the last Imperial Conference, and in full sympathy with the view that the naval supremacy of Britain is essential to the security of commerce, the safety of the Empire, and the peace of the world. The House expresses its firm conviction that whenever the need arises the Canadian people will be found ready and willing to make any sacrifice that is required to give to the Imperial authorities the most loyal and hearty co-operation in every movement for the maintenance of the integrity and honour of the Empire.’ Resolution ends. I understand that the Dominion Government propose that its Minister of Defence should come here at an early date to confer with the Imperial naval and military authorities upon technical matters arising on the resolution. His Majesty’s Government have also before them recent patriotic proposals made by New Zealand and Australia—proposals most highly appreciated by the Mother-country, and demanding very cordial and careful consideration both as to principle and detail. I desire, therefore, to commend to you the following important suggestion—viz., that a conference of representatives of the self-governing dominions convened under the terms of the resolutions of one of the Conference of 1907, which provides that such subsidiary Conferences should be held in London early in next July. The object of the Conference would be to discuss the general questions of naval and military defence of the Empire, with special reference to the Canadian resolution and to the proposals from New Zealand and Australia to which have referred. I assume that, as the resolution would be generally upon technical or quasi-technical naval and military matters, that the other Governments of the self-governing dominions would elect to be represented, as in the case of Canada, by their Ministers of Defence, or, failing them, by some other members of the Government assisted by expert advice, but it is entirely for the Government of New Zealand to decide the precise form of its representation. The Conference would, of course, be of a purely consultative character. It would be held in private, and its deliberations would be assisted by the presence of members of other expert advisers of His Majesty’s Government. I am addressing a similar message to the other members of the Imperial Conference. Message ends. I am strongly of opinion that as early confidential exchange of views between His Majesty’s Government and the Governments of His Majesty’s self-governing dominions beyond the seas would be of the greatest mutual advantage, and I therefore trust that your Prime Minister and his colleagues will see their way to adopt the proposal.’

“PLUNKET.”

End of Lord Crewe’s cable.

Telegram from the Prime Minister, Wellington, to His Excellency the Governor, Kawhia :—

“His Excellency the Governor, Kawhia.

“Wellington, 3rd May, 1909.

“YOUR EXCELLENCY’S telegram from Secretary of State for the Colonies dated 30th April. I will bring the matter before my colleagues in Wellington, on Wednesday, the 5th instant, my absence from Wellington preventing my doing so earlier, and I shall be glad if your Excellency will inform the Secretary of State accordingly. I think there can be no doubt about our agreeing to request of the Secretary of State, but the month of July, as far as New Zealand is concerned, is impossible, as it is in the middle of our session. I will communicate with your Excellency again on Wednesday.

“J. G. WARD.”

Telegram from the Prime Minister, Wellington, to His Excellency the Governor, New Plymouth :—

“His Excellency the Governor, New Plymouth.

“6th May, 1909.

“IN further reference to the Secretary of State for the Colonies’ cable of the 3rd instant *re* Imperial Naval Conference. To enable Ministers to attend as requested, an early session of Parliament would be necessary, with the object of obtaining supplies and adjourning during the absence of Ministers in England; this adjournment being absolutely necessary, inasmuch as this is a new

Parliament and is the first session of that Parliament. If it is necessary that New Zealand should be represented it would be desirable that the date should be fixed not earlier than the last week in July. On receipt of reply from the Home Government, Parliament will be called for the 10th June for the purpose of considering the matter, that being the earliest possible date under the existing prorogation. The opinion of Ministers here is that the representations of all parts of the Empire at the Conference is essential, and that the course the Home Government is taking is the right one and is in the best interests of the Empire. They recognise that it would be a matter of much regret if, through not being able to postpone the meeting of the new Parliament, New Zealand could not be represented at the Conference.

“J. G. WARD.”

Cablegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to His Excellency the Governor:—

“His Excellency the Governor, Wellington.

“London, 12th May, 1909.

“WITH reference to your telegram of 6th May, I desire, in name of Prime Minister and of His Majesty's Government, to express their gratification at readiness of Dominion's Government to take part in Conference. I hope that, as result of communication now proceeding, it will be possible shortly to fix definitely date for its meeting convenient to all Governments.

“CREWE.”

Telegram from His Excellency the Governor to the Prime Minister, Wellington:—

“The Right Hon. the Prime Minister, Wellington.

“Waiouru, 18th May, 1909.

“THE Governor has to-day received the following telegram, dated 17th May, from the Secretary of State for the Colonies: ‘Please inform your Ministers that Government of Commonwealth of Australia and Government of Canada have accepted invitation to Defence Conference proposed in my telegram of 30th April, and that Governments of South African Colonies will authorise delegates sent Home in connection with union of South African States to attend Conference. In these circumstances, I earnestly hope that the Dominion of New Zealand will be represented, and that it may be possible for Sir Joseph Ward, as Minister of Defence and Prime Minister, to be spared from his important duties to attend Conference. It is now proposed to hold Conference at end of July, as that date will be convenient for the other delegates, and will, I hope, be also convenient to your Prime Minister.’

Telegram from the Prime Minister, Wellington, to His Excellency the Governor, Auckland:—

“His Excellency the Governor, Auckland.

“Wellington, 19th May, 1909.

“THE Prime Minister presents his compliments to His Excellency the Governor, and will be glad if he will telegraph Secretary of State acknowledging receipt of telegram dated 17th May, and intimating to him that the importance of the Naval Conference is fully recognised by the New Zealand Government, and efforts will be made in the direction indicated; and the Secretary of State for the Colonies will be advised as soon as the Prime Minister is in a position to do so.

“J. G. WARD.”

Here I want to say that before an answer to the last communication can be sent it is necessary, as far as the Government is concerned, that the Government should know what the opinion of members of Parliament is, as, until we know what their opinion is, it is not possible for us to say “Yes” or “No” to the invitation. We will not accept the responsibility of saying “No” to it until we have the opinion of the members who are assembled to-day. It is for this reason I have asked honourable members to meet here upon this occasion and in this way, because there was no other way open to me—because there was no other way of ascertaining their views upon the question in time to enable me to reply. Having done that—having ascertained what the will of Parliament is upon the matter—our responsibility in that respect ends. We cannot—and I am going to discuss it later on—we cannot, with the responsibility upon our shoulders, agree to suggestions which we have seen made that some one without responsibility to the country—that some one not vested with the full responsibility entailed upon a Minister of the Crown—should be deputed to represent this country at a Conference of such a magnitude as this is—at one of such vital importance to the Empire as a whole; and in that respect New Zealand is vitally concerned—at one where the Prime Minister of England, in that despatch to which I have alluded, declares that the New Zealand offer of a Dreadnought is to be considered. This the British Prime Minister has put on record in a despatch, not only to this Government but to the Canadian Government, to the Australian Government, and to the South African Governments. In sending a circular cable on the subject to the respective Governments he has intimated that among the matters to be considered at that important Conference is the offer of the New Zealand Government, on behalf of the people of this country, of a Dreadnought, or two; and at that Conference that important matter is to be considered. I direct attention to this, for the purpose of keeping the sequence of this matter in the minds of honourable members. In acknowledging the offer of Dreadnoughts by the New Zealand Government, the British Government, through His Excellency the Governor, intimated that they were sending out to this country a despatch in connection with the offer for our consideration. I have directed attention to the fact, which is put on record in its sequence, that after they had sent that communication they decided, for reasons best known to the Imperial Government, to hold a Conference in London, at which they invited the oversea dominions to be present by representatives. Up to now we have not received the despatch referred to, for the obvious reason, it appears to me, that the Prime Minister of England has, in a certain despatch sent to the Governments of all the self-governing dominions, said, among other things, that the offer of the New Zealand Dreadnoughts is to come before that Conference for consideration. That being so, the responsibility is on the members of Parliament of this country to say whether or not the Government of this country is to be represented at that Conference, and to say by whom it is to be represented. I want to say that the Ministry are absolutely unanimous in the view they take with regard to the question of representation at this unprecedented Conference,

the importance of which I cannot do other than notice an effort has recently been made by some of our opponents to discount. Every member of the Ministry, myself included, is of one opinion. Considering the transcendent importance of the whole position, brought about by causes known to every one in this country—by causes that have attracted the attention of all parties in the Old Land and in this country, and of all parties in every other portion of the Empire, to the necessity for something out of the ordinary being done—there is but one opinion among the members of the Ministry, and that is—although I lay myself open to the charge, by any one who has the unfairness to use it, of being egotistical in saying so—that the head of the Government in this country ought to be the representative of the people at that Conference, for the purpose of taking part in what is of vital importance to the Empire as a whole. Now, having said this, may I for one moment say a word or two as to why this offer was made by the New Zealand Government? May I also here take the opportunity of referring to a very unfair—and, in fact, in some respect, indecently unfair—accusation made against myself of having sent a telegram to the editors of the Press throughout the country, inviting their opinion or consulting them on this matter, and at the same time ignoring members of Parliament by not sending a telegram to them? I say I have never sent any telegram of the kind to any editors of the Press in this country.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—Read the wire.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Has the honourable gentleman seen it? I want to say I have got it here.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—I will read it if you will not.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I am very glad; let the honourable gentleman read it. I say so at once. I was going to remark that this telegram is marked "Strictly confidential." It was sent by me to the editors of the Press throughout the country.

Mr. MASSEY.—Is it necessary to refer to it?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I am going to allude to it, because I am going to put on record why we made the offer.

Mr. MASSEY.—It is altogether beside the question.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I think the position ought to be stated.

Mr. MASSEY.—I am quite willing you should do so: make no mistake about that.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I have no objection to the honourable gentleman holding an opposite view; but my opinion is that the position should be stated. I want to say here that upon the day the offer was made by the New Zealand Government an interview was given by me to the Press. I sent a telegram, marked "Strictly confidential," after the offer was made to the Home Government and after the interview was granted to the Press, and in that I indicated why that course had been taken. It remained for only one editor in the country to do that which it is well known to every honourable member of this House who has had any business to do with myself in confidence I have never done. I have received many hundreds of confidential communications from people in New Zealand—from political opponents as well as supporters—on matters of vital importance to them, and I have never once in my whole history disclosed a confidential communication to anybody. The editors of the papers throughout this country, and the editors of the Opposition Press, I have found without exception to be honourable men. I have had to communicate with many of them confidentially on more than one occasion in my position as a Minister of the Crown, and, to their credit, there has been but one instance of an editor breaking that confidence by publicity in the columns of his paper. I was going to tell the House, if the House accepted the responsibility of removing the "Strictly confidential" from it, what the communication was, if my honourable friend the member for Christchurch North had not undertaken to do so.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—At your invitation.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Pardon me. It was not at my invitation at all. The honourable member said he would read the telegram, and I replied, "Very well; you can do so."

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—Very well; I will.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I do not object to your reading it. It relieves me from the necessity of asking the House to remove the "Strictly confidential" from the telegram. Now, Sir, at the time when that offer was made by the Government it is within the knowledge of every man in this country that the question of party never once came into consideration in this connection, and there is no man but that all through the piece would have recognised that I had steadfastly kept this matter clear of party. I have never once made any allusion to it in New Zealand that in any way introduced a question of party. I have all along refused to criticize remarks which public men and the Press made that I looked upon as approaching anything of a party character. I have refused to be interviewed on this question from any party standpoint. I have declined to discuss the views put on record by other people, because I declared it as my opinion that in a matter of this sort it was our duty as members of the Legislature, in matters where the vital interests of the Empire are concerned, to tower above party, both in the general interests of the Old Country and in our own interests as well. At the time that communication went out confidentially to the editors of the Press we, as members of the Administration, knew of one matter that we regarded as of the most dangerous significance that had not appeared in the Press, and had not been made public. We regarded it as of most vital importance. Later on it came out in the Press, it is true, but at that juncture we knew of a matter that we regarded as of the greatest importance as having a bearing upon the situation connected with the British navy, which we felt it to be our duty not to refer to publicly, and which we considered justified us in arriving at the decision we did; and we believed that it was in the best interests of the country that we should make the offer, and also that I should telegraph the editors of the Press of all classes in the direction in which I did. I should do exactly the same thing under similar circumstances to-morrow; and when honourable members have heard that telegram read I am sure they will say that I was not consulting or asking the opinion of any editor.

Mr. MASSEY.—It was a very improper thing to do.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I am sorry the honourable gentleman thinks so.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—It did not go through to all papers.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—It was addressed to the editors of all papers.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—Some deny point blank that they received it.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—It was a general authority that it was to be given to the Press of New Zealand.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—I am surprised they did not all get it.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I say it was a general authority to send it out to the editors of the Press of New Zealand. There was no distinction of any sort or kind made, and I am very much surprised to hear that any one of them did not get it.

Mr. MASSEY.—Did you send it to the *Dominion*?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Where is the *Dominion*?

Mr. MASSEY.—Did you send it to the *Christchurch Press*?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—The authority was to send it to the editors of all papers. I can look up the matter, and see what papers received it. I repeat there was a general instruction for that telegram to be sent to all papers, and that as far as I am concerned no distinction of any kind was made. If it did not go to the *Dominion*, it did not go to the *New Zealand Times*. I tell that to the honourable gentleman to pacify him. It was telegraphed from Wellington, and it is possible—and I should not be surprised to find it so—that for that reason it did not go to any of the papers in Wellington. I will be very glad to look it up and see. The instruction given by me was to send that telegram to the editors of the Press throughout this country. I repeat that, because I have not distinguished between one or another in a matter of this kind. Before that communication had been sent to the Press every honourable member knows that the Government had come to their decision. And here, by the way, let me say that—though there are some in the country who do not agree with it, and that they have a right to differ from the Government in a matter of the kind I fully recognise, and I cannot find fault with it—the action of the Government, generally speaking, has been affirmed and applauded throughout this Dominion as the right thing to have done, and one in the general interests of the Empire. I have here on this table many hundreds of communications from representative bodies and individuals of all kinds and classes throughout this country, without a single exception, supporting the action of the Government. It would be invidious of me to take any one of them—they apply to all classes in New Zealand from end to end—in city, town, and country; and, generally speaking, the action of the Government in this matter has been applauded and supported. I allude to that only for the purpose of affirming that which a large number of my listeners here, as well as myself, know to be the case: they all at heart know—and we know—that if there is any doubt about the superiority of the British navy to maintain the supremacy of the sea that we, as a portion of that country, would very quickly cease to be a portion of it. Therefore the people of this country, irrespective of party or of political feeling, in view of the nature of the momentous matter that has arisen, have, with a few exceptions, affirmed the action of the Government from the North Cape to the Bluff. So in that respect the action we took at that moment is justified in the opinion of the people.

Mr. MASSEY.—Did you ask us here to tell us that?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—The honourable gentleman must know that I cannot in the course of my explanation avoid referring to that.

Mr. ALLEN.—Could not you deal with that in Parliament?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I will, of course, deal with it in Parliament, but I say a complaint has been made as to the way the Government acted in this particular matter.

Mr. ALLEN.—It is very unfair to ask us here to tell us that.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Will the honourable gentleman tell us now if he is going to agree with the proposal?

Mr. MASSEY.—Make the proposal.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—The honourable gentleman will see that I must make this explanation in the general interests of the country and as the justification for our action, which has resulted in our being invited to the Imperial Conference.

Mr. MASSEY.—Nonsense. It has nothing to do with it.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—It has, because I say advisedly that my belief is that if we had not made that offer of a Dreadnought or two to the British Government you would not have heard of the Imperial Conference being held, and for that reason I am justified in saying what I am doing about this matter. And I here want to put on record why we made that offer which I believe was a factor in the convening of the Imperial Conference, and which certainly has created the necessity of honourable members being present to-day to say whether or not we are to accept the invitation. It is in my opinion necessary that I should put on record what we have done in that respect. I have read the despatches connected with this matter, and I am now going to quote the record of a statement made publicly in the House of Commons by Sir Edward Grey, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, on the same subject. He said,—

“He commended the absence of party feeling in Mr. Lee’s speech, but said that the Opposition ought to have deferred the motion of censure until July, when the ship-building vote would be considered, and when more information enabling them to form a right judgment would be available to the House and the country.”

The Minister continued,—

“It is right to view the situation that is created by the German programme as grave. When that programme is complete Germany will have thirty-three Dreadnoughts, the most powerful fleet in the world. That imposes on Britain the necessity of rebuilding her whole fleet,”

Sir Edward Grey's statement caused a sensation in a crowded House. He proceeded,—

"The element of uncertainty is when this rebuilding of the fleet must be done. The first necessity therefore is to take stock of the plant available in the country. That the Admiralty has done. The capacity of Great Britain for building the hulls and the propelling machinery of battleships and the manufacture of the largest guns is considerably in excess of that of Germany. A doubtful point is the comparative capacity to provide gun-mountings. The Admiralty has now arranged with the manufacturers to provide such an increase that in a few months a similar advance will be made in this branch."

Dealing with the diplomatic relations between Britain and Germany Sir Edward Grey insisted on the good results of King Edward's visit to Berlin. Proceeding, he said,—

"Two things might produce a conflict between the two nations. The first is an attempt by Britain to isolate Germany; the second is the isolation of Britain in an attempt by any continental Power to dominate and dictate the policy of Europe. There is no reason to apprehend either contingency. European Powers are spending half their revenue in preparations to kill each other. The extent of this expenditure has become a satire reflecting upon civilisation, but Britain must be prepared to defend her national existence under conditions imposed by their own generation. I am glad that the colonies, such as New Zealand, recognise that their national existence is one with ours."

"The only possible basis of agreement as to limitation is an acknowledgment of British naval superiority. In January I made our information regarding the acceleration of building operations in Germany known to Germany, adding that they must not be surprised if the British estimates increased. Germany's verbal, but quite definite, declaration that they would have thirteen Dreadnoughts at the end of 1912 disposes of any extreme apprehension regarding 1910-1911."

"The four British hypothetical Dreadnoughts proposed to be built is not intended as a limitation of the next naval programme. National security shall have the benefit of any doubt."

I place that before honourable members to show that the convening of this Conference by the British Government is more than justified by the words out of the mouth of the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and I do not myself know anything that could be more convincing, anything more calculated to enable the people of this country, whatever their views may be, to realise the importance of this matter than the words of a man in the position of Secretary for Foreign Affairs in Great Britain. I do not believe any member of this House or the people of the country, whose business it may not be to examine closely into the position, can on reading an utterance of that kind overestimate what is meant by this Imperial Conference. Here I want to put on record also in connection with this matter the opinion of a man outside Parliament, of a man in the Old Country who was leader of a very large section of the people, on a point upon which a smaller section in this country appear to entertain a different opinion, the opinion of one who regards this matter as one of vital importance to the future preservation of Great Britain and also to the future preservation of the peace of the world. I refer to the written statement of Mr. Robert Blatchford.

An Hon. MEMBER.—Oh!

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—It is not a laughing matter.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—You are hard pushed for evidence.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Nothing of the kind. I am going to put his own words on record, because I honestly believe, myself, that with the best of intentions a section of the community of this country is mistaken in the view they take regarding this matter, which I believe to be as vital to their interests as individuals as it is to any other interests in this or any other portion of the British Empire. The statement I refer to is headed "The Presence of a Great Danger," and is as follows:—

"Let me put the position once more as I see it. Germany is the greatest military Power in the world. She has made it evident—so evident that even the Liberal Cabinet have seen it—that she means to be the greatest naval Power in the world."

"To attain her end she will shrink from neither trouble nor expense. She has a genius for organization, and leaves nothing to chance. Her rulers do not talk: they act. They do not make the fatal mistake of confusing words and facts. The astounding progress made by Germany during the last ten years is proof of this contention. A year ago we were told that our naval power was overwhelming, and that Germany never could compete, because she had not the means; we could always build faster than she. But to-day we are not sure that we can build as fast."

"Seeing what I see of the German methods, and knowing what I know of British methods, I cannot help feeling that the Germans, by their superior unity, by their closer secrecy, by their more direct and single purpose, and by their national capacity and training for organization, have stolen a march upon us, and will very soon leave us behind, unless we wake up and realise the gravity of the danger."

"Now look at our side of the water. We are disunited; we are untrained; we are overconfident; we are strongly averse to war; we are still more strongly attached to our own ease and freedom. We do not want to fight, we do not want to pay; we do not want to worry. We are full of words; and we have not learnt that words are not deeds, and that figures are not facts."

"The German people are a military people. They are a nation of drilled men. Only a drilled man can appreciate the importance of that factor in the sum."

"Germany, bent upon any great national enterprise, works like a machine."

"I am convinced that the German nation is more efficient for war than the British nation; that the German administration is more efficient for war than our administration; and that Germany means war."

"Now, if such a nation as Germany means war, it will tax all our resources to meet her."

"Those passages in Sir Edward Grey's speech in which he hints at 'agreements' and limitations of armament are evidences of our deplorable weakness. Germany will not be stopped by words. Germany means to fight, is preparing to fight, believes that she can win. We have either to fight or to go under.

"The idea that philanthropic speeches, or diplomatic overtures, or European alliances can save us is a cowardly, a weak, and a dangerous idea.

"The idea that we can meet this bold and open menace of a brave, united, and determined nation by some cheap expedient is an idea that will land us in ruin and disgrace.

"We have got to make a united and heroic effort, and to make it now, or we shall be crushed. We have got to pay and to make sacrifices, or we shall be crushed. Even when we have paid, and have armed, and have made sacrifices we shall have to be ready to fight. Germany will not be bluffed. Germany will not fight with figures and with words. Germany believes that she can beat us, and Germany means to try.

"I am speaking now with a full sense of the responsibility I incur. I know that I am doing an unpopular thing. I know that I shall meet with hostility from my own party. I know that I shall be called a jingo, and a firebrand, and, perhaps, a traitor. But I have never yet been silent because the truth was dangerous or did not pay. I believe that this German crisis is the most momentous crisis since the beginning of the nineteenth century. I believe that it cannot be averted or met without a great national effort.

"I hold that we should act at once, and not as we should act if war were certain within a year. I have sufficient confidence in the British people to feel that if they were told fully and frankly the whole of the facts they would be equal to the demand made upon them.

"I am ill. I am pressed with business worries; I am overweighted with work; but I feel it my duty as a man, as a Socialist, and as a British citizen, to do the little I am able to do towards rousing the public attention to a great danger.

"We want a powerful fleet, and a perfect organization behind the fleet. We want an arm of defence. We want these things now, and we want them upon a war footing. I had intended to say a few words upon the strategic situation, but I am not equal to it.

"But I would point out that the German fleet will have the great advantage of being able to choose their own time for attack, and that our fleet should be much stronger than theirs if we are to be always ready to meet their full force at any hour and at any point. Moreover, there is Austria—Austria can put a fleet of Dreadnoughts into the Mediterranean. We must keep all ours here to face Germany.

"I wish I could feel that not a single British citizen would allow partisanship or party shibboleths or political theories to blind or to mislead him in this hour of national peril.

"The downfall of England would be a disaster to the human race.

"In the old days when war threatened our fathers it was the custom to light beacon fires upon the hills. I light my fire to-day, and it shall not go out if I can keep it burning."

I quote those words, gentlemen, for the reason that they show that in the Old Country, where there are wide differences of opinion, as there are here, upon political questions, and where there is a wide divergence of opinion in many ways, one of the leading Ministers of the Crown in a Government which formerly showed a great desire to limit the extension of the British navy, believing that it was upon a safe basis—the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs—states that the position is such that they must rebuild the whole fleet. You hear, out of the mouth of a man representing an extreme section of the community in the Old Country, warning words spoken from a bed of illness, appealing to his compatriots throughout the country to sink party differences, to come into line, and to co-operate with those who are doing that which we as a portion of the British Empire are called upon, whether we like it or not, to do our share in.

Mr. MASSEY.—We are willing to do it.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Yes, and we are willing to do it—to help the Old Country. But when we are invited to a Conference in order to consider what is the best possible basis, and to consider the offer of a Dreadnought made by New Zealand, and when we ask whether the responsible man at the head of the Administration that made that offer on the part of the people should represent his country, the question is going to be raised as to whether we are to go on with the business of Parliament without his leadership of his own party—

Mr. MASSEY.—Why not?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD—when matters of greater importance are to be discussed than the whole of ours here. On this subject let me quote from another authority who cannot be questioned—one who has maintained a great name for himself in the navy itself—Lord Charles Beresford. Writing to a Navy League meeting at Bournemouth, under date the 20th April, Lord Charles Beresford wishes the league success in raising the nation to a sense of its grave danger. "If the country knew the whole truth," said the Admiral, "there would be a panic." I do not believe that a man in his position would have made a statement of that kind unless he believed it to be absolutely true. Then, the gentleman who was Chairman of the Committee of Imperial Defence—and his utterances will carry weight, both here and elsewhere—I refer to Lord Esher—in the course of a speech on the 1st June, only five or six days ago, declared that Britain stood in a more perilous position to-day than at any time during the last hundred years. Britain, said His Lordship, ought to build two warships for every one built by the next strongest European Power. And now, coming nearer home, what has the Federal Government of Australia done? I have a later opinion than the honourable gentleman who, when I first spoke to-day, wanted to know what Australia did in the absence of Parliament, and I am going to tell the honourable gentleman what they have done. As the Federal Government of Australia has been quoted more than once in certain quarters as one that we should follow, I will now invite those who quoted it to be logical and agree with what the Federal Government has done. This is a cable which I received to-day, and it is a quotation from a leading article in the Melbourne *Argus* to-day.

An Hon. MEMBER.—A leading article?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—It is an extract from a leading article published in the *Melbourne Argus* this morning:—

“Australia’s obligation to share in the defence of the Empire realised by the new Commonwealth Ministry, and the new Federal Cabinet has decided to cable to the Imperial Government offering a Dreadnought or an equivalent contribution”——

Hon. MEMBERS.—Hear, hear.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Now, just listen. Let me inform the House that though, as honourable members know, the Federal Parliament was in session, an adjournment took place the other day,—

“And although the Parliament was in session, the Cabinet assumed the responsibility of making the offer, confident of the ratification of Parliament when it assembles. Sir Joseph Ward took the same responsibility as Premier, and also faced the position boldly, trusting to the Imperial spirit and the courage of the people to indorse his action.”

Let me ask those members who have quoted the Federal Government of Australia against me to realise what that means. I am not going to give any expression of opinion—it would be improper for me to do so—upon any of the troubles or causes that have brought about the change of Government, or the conditions under which it represents a majority in the Federal House of Representatives; but the new Government there is the only one that has had a majority behind it for a considerable period, and it has done as we have done in New Zealand—it has shown the people outside of Great Britain that the sons of the Empire out in these southern seas, when it comes to an emergency, are not going to be misjudged by the people who represent them in Parliament—that they are not going to display weakness, or a want of ordinary courage, or anything akin to cowardice; but the Government of the day is ready to accept the full responsibility, and will show what these countries will do when it comes to a question of insuring the dominance of the old British navy, which during the greater portion of the last century has given us its support and protection for next-door to nothing.

Mr. MASSEY.—And you objected to any payment at one time.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I did nothing of the kind.

Mr. MASSEY.—You voted against it.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—The honourable gentleman is grossly unfair. He knows that he is trying to put me in a wrong position. I saw something of the sort published in one of the Opposition papers, and I thought it unworthy of myself to contradict it. I have always strongly supported the British navy, before I was in the House and since, both on the platform and in Parliament, and fortunately I have records that will show it from the very first; and such an insinuation to the contrary comes with bad grace from any one. Now, I want to say one word in connection with the representation of New Zealand. I have already informed the gentlemen who are present that every member of the Administration believes that the head of the Government should represent this country at that Conference. If the House decides in that direction—that the head of the Government is to represent the country at that Conference—it raises the question, so far as the head of the Government is concerned, of his responsibility to the country, to Parliament, and to his own party; and you cannot disassociate the three propositions upon any ground, as far as those who may not see eye to eye with the Government so far as policy is concerned. I say here now, in unmistakable language, that if this House expects the head of the Government to go to the Imperial Conference, and asks him to do so with Parliament sitting in his absence, I should unequivocally decline to go.

Mr. MASSEY.—You would not be doing your duty.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—The honourable gentleman will, I trust, do his duty.

Mr. MASSEY.—I shall do my duty.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—So will I. If the honourable member does do so he will be doing what is right, and so will I. Now, I want to put the question before honourable members in connection with this matter. I have noticed—and how thin indeed it has been—the statement that has been published; and here let me say that I compliment the Opposition Press of this country.

An Hon. MEMBER.—There is an exception.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I say that in this matter the Opposition Press throughout this country—with an exception—has risen above party and beyond party in a way I most gratefully acknowledge, and in a way that is now and will be recognised when the history of this country comes to be written. It will then be written that when it comes to a question of vital consequence to the Empire as a whole, to the people of all classes, the Press of this country—those opposing the Government as well as those supporting the Government—have chosen to put the affairs of the Empire first and local and parochial party politics next; and they have in one voice gone in the direction of saying that this country should be represented at the Imperial Conference, and that the representative should be the Prime Minister. And now we come to the issue that Parliament ought to proceed with its business in the absence of the leader of the Government side.

Mr. MASSEY.—Hear, hear.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—There is such a thing known in the world of sport as “playing the game.” In 1902, when the late Prime Minister went to the Old Country, under what circumstances did he go?

Mr. MASSEY.—We all know.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—He came back from an appeal to the people, fresh from the polls, and was invited to an important ceremony, and he asked Parliament to adjourn until his return, and there was practically no dissent. The present leader of the Opposition and the members of his party voted for it, and they eulogized the Prime Minister’s going, and emphasized the fact that the Prime Minister of the day ought to go with the good feeling and appreciation and

support of the people of all classes, and with the support of members of Parliament. And he went, Parliament adjourning until his return. That was, as this is, the first session of a new Parliament, under the leadership of a Prime Minister who had been before the country more than once, and who had come back from the polls more than once. The Parliament of the country under these circumstances practically unanimously voted that he should go to England to represent New Zealand, and that during his absence the business of Parliament should be deferred. Later on, in the concluding session of a Parliament, with the same Prime Minister, when he desired to attend on a second occasion, the course followed was the right one. An acting-leader was appointed in his absence, and the business of the country went on. Parliament in 1902 established a precedent, and, from every standpoint, rightly so. It is said that the leader of a party who, returning from the country, has not had an opportunity of meeting his own followers who have just been elected to Parliament under the banner of the side which he leads—the proposition is made for the first time in connection with the history of this country that that leader, when circumstances of vital consequence to the Empire have arisen—circumstances known to every one in this country as entirely beyond his control—should go to the Conference, and that in his absence an opportunity should be given to his opponents to stand up and move resolutions affecting the leader and the policy he has formulated and which his party supported. And they call that “playing the game,” and ask that, when the exigencies of the Empire call for that leader to be in the Old Land, where the business transcends in importance anything at present otherwise affecting New Zealand, the business of Parliament should go on in his absence, when the whole policy he has been to the country upon would be discussed and he not there to take part in the discussion. This is not a fair proposition. If it were so, why was it not done in the case of Mr. Seddon?

An Hon. MEMBER.—It was done.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—The first time he went away, in 1902, under exactly similar conditions to what we are placed in now, Parliament adjourned until after his return. If he had been treated as it is proposed by the Opposition to treat me, he would not have gone; and, what is more, I say without reservation that it would have been grossly unfair to have expected any member of his Ministry to act in the position of acting-leader in the absence of the Prime Minister. There is such a thing as fairness to the man who takes your place, and what fairness would there be to an acting-leader who is not responsible for the policy of the Government, and who was not at the head of the Administration when that policy was affirmed? What would be the position of that acting-leader who, immediately after his leader's return from the polls, is asked to defend not only a policy for which he is not responsible, but, for instance, a reconstruction of the Ministry itself? He is part of the Administration, it is true, but he is not actually in the position of leader of the party; and it is palpable unfairness, I contend, to ask that a man as acting-leader should be left behind and be expected to be responsible for the policy. No man who knows anything about the history of the country could gainsay the statement I make. It would be unfair in the first place to the country, to whom I am responsible in my official position, for me to go away from that party which has been returned under my leadership—and, remember, returned for the first time under my leadership—with a number of new members to whom I have only had the opportunity of saying “How do you do?” and new Ministers on these benches concerning whom there may be criticisms—

An Hon. MEMBER.—Cannot they defend themselves?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—They can, but none of them are responsible for my action in this respect. I am alone responsible for it. I may say every colleague of mine agrees with what I am putting before members to-day. It is not reflecting in any way on any of them—quite the contrary. You cannot get away from the fact, as a matter of common-sense procedure, that no matter how able another Minister may be, to call on him to act for an absent Prime Minister who is responsible for a policy does not give him a fair show. To expect him to act in the absence of his leader under such circumstances would be grossly unfair, and I say it has never been done in New Zealand; and if I am called on to represent this country at this Conference, which men on both sides of politics in the Old Land have said is of vital importance, and which we in this portion of the British dominions recognise as being of a most important character, we all realise that it is impossible for all that is to come before the Conference to be disclosed. We recognise that no British Government would put up an invitation to the Governments of the oversea dominions the details of matters to come before the Conference, such as those of defensive organization, or strategical matters, or an extension of the arrangements between the Old Land and the outlying possessions. They could not be expected, unless they were devoid of common-sense, to divulge what is to be brought up in a private Conference of this kind. It is my belief, and it is the belief of many other people better able to judge than I am, that in the history of the Old World never since the days of Nelson has there been an epoch of such gravity to the United Kingdom and its outlying possessions as we have arrived at now. We have already as a community shown our faith in a practical way in the offer by the Government of New Zealand on behalf of the people in support of the navy. Then, surely it must be admitted as a corollary and consequence of it that we must as a community be represented at the Conference; and, if represented at all, we should be represented by a responsible man, who could come back to Parliament and explain such proposals as are necessary for Parliament to consider in connection with this all-important question. Let me say one word for the purpose of removing any wrong impression that may exist in the mind of anybody regarding the High Commissioner, who has creditably filled important positions in this country, and who I am sure will fill his present important position in the Old Country with satisfaction to the people generally. The suggestion has been made that he should represent New Zealand at this Imperial Conference. I want to say that I do not believe if Mr. Hall-Jones, recognising the responsibilities of Ministers of the Crown to Parliament and the people, were asked to represent New Zealand he would do so unless he were instructed by the Government to do it, to

whom he is responsible and not to the people. There is nothing more certain than this: you cannot remove the responsibility vested in a Minister of the Crown on to another's shoulders. It is impossible for any one who as a Minister of the Crown in this country has a great responsibility imposed upon him by statute—it is impossible for any one, I say, once he has passed out of office to have that responsibility, it matters not what capacity he has. We may have our own opinions on many things, but it is a different thing when heavy responsibility to the people, even though they be of Imperial concern, are being dealt with. Then, I say, especially when such large financial considerations are involved, that only Ministers of the Crown owing a responsibility to the people should, on behalf of the people, attend such a Conference, and, I think I am right in saying, the more so when it is to be a private Conference. If it were an open Conference there is something to be said as to having representation without that responsibility which only the official position of the Minister of the Crown gives him in the representative institution that he belongs to. In this matter, where it is stated by an eminent member of the Government of the Old Land that a new era has been entered on, the parent country calls upon her children beyond the seas to go Home and discuss with her not only matters of Empire concern, but matters some of which cannot be named in a circular invitation. If we want to arrive at a proper judgment later on we must have there some person in authority, from whom on the floor of Parliament we shall have the opportunity of hearing such proposals as he can without breach of secrecy disclose to the Parliament of New Zealand. You must have the opportunity when he comes back of hearing him explain what this Conference desires and what responsibilities are to be imposed upon our own country. And there is this one overriding fact which none can deny: our High Commissioner may be the ablest man in the wide world, or any other person outside the Administration might be the wisest person in the wide world, but there is no person, excepting the Prime Minister, in this or any other self-governing country—or in the Mother-country itself—who can stake the existence of his Government upon what he proposes to submit to the Parliament. Until to-day the only country that has offered to contribute a battleship to the Old Country in recent times—I am not talking about the offer of troops at the time of the South African war—is New Zealand. I am not speaking of the offer from a commercial point of view as far as New Zealand goes, because it is our duty to do what we have done, and the result is that the general question of naval defence of the Empire has led to the convening of the Imperial Conference; and I say that a factor in the matter which no one can deny is that the only person who has the responsibility given to him under the Constitution of staking the existence of his Government is the Prime Minister, and he is therefore the only one who is responsible to Parliament and to the people—that is, he is the only man who can stake the fate of his Ministry.

Mr. MASSEY.—That makes it a party question.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Pardon me. What I was stating is absolutely correct, and it is the only way in which the voice of the people in a matter of this or any other of great importance can be heard. The honourable gentleman will see that it is not a party question. It is, in my judgment, entirely above party. Supposing some irresponsible person who was not vested with the power of a Minister of the Crown were to go to that Conference and agree to proposals which could not be disclosed, what would you say? I ask those gentlemen here who take exception to the proposal, what would they expect that man to do? Could you expect the representative who is not a Minister of the Crown to cable out to the Government asking what he was to do?

Mr. MASSEY.—Mr. Asquith says the Conference will be purely consultative.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Mr. Asquith says the New Zealand offer of a Dreadnought was to be considered at that Conference. Whether I am going to that Conference or not, it is for the Parliament to say whether we are represented there or not. We believe that we are representing the wishes of the country in this matter. The constitutional aspect of the question can be discussed independently. We believe we are representing the feelings of the people in regard to what we consider is a serious emergency, which has since been publicly confirmed in the House of Commons by a responsible Minister of the Crown; it has been confirmed by others, and we have put it above party feeling. We took the step we did at the moment when the danger appeared to us to be vital, and we wanted our offer not only to have a moral effect, but a practical effect; and we wanted the whole world to realise that we had grown to a position as a part of the British Empire when we should help the Old Country to defend itself against the acknowledged aggressiveness of a very powerful country, and from the information we had we believed that we had reached, as I have already said, a point when we should be ready to take a hand. We believe we did right, and we believe so still.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—Will you submit the country to any expenditure if you go Home?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I recognise that I have great responsibilities, and I am not going to make any tied statement as to what I might do, or might not do, but I will just do what I have been trying to do up to now: I have tried to exercise common-sense, and I have tried to do what is right, but beyond that no one can say as to what may be the outcome of a Conference of that kind; and if I go to it—of course, it is not settled—it is impossible, nor do I think it would be fair for any one to expect me to make a declaration as to what might be the outcome of such a Conference. But it is a certainty that whatever may be done at that Conference, or whatever the representative of this country agrees to, it cannot be binding until the Parliament of New Zealand is consulted and approves of any proposals that may be made. I fully recognise my responsibilities. I know what they are, both to the Parliament and the people of my own country, and I can be depended upon to do that which I believe to be right and best, and to submit any proposals for the judgment of the representatives of the people here. They will have either to accept or reject them. That is the safety-valve as far as this country is concerned. If Parliament adjourns I recognise that, according to my lights, with which the whole of my colleagues concur, I have a duty in this matter to our own country, and there is a duty also imposed upon

this country. There is a consensus of opinion outside of the members of Parliament that I should represent this country at that Conference, and if members of Parliament are in accord with the proposition that New Zealand should be represented by the Prime Minister, and that the House should adjourn during his absence—

An Hon. MEMBER.—Will you put the two proposals separately?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I propose to ask that we should prorogue until the 30th September. I propose to ask that we should take supplies in the ordinary way, and that we should have our financial arrangements made for the purpose of carrying on our public works. I do not know of any minor matters at this moment that may require to be provided for, though there may be one or two to be considered in the event of its being decided that I should go.

Mr. MASSEY.—Are you going to take the opinion of this meeting?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I intend to take the opinion of this meeting.

Mr. MASSEY.—On the two questions separately?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I do not object to their being taken separately.

Mr. MASSEY.—You are going to propose them now?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—The resolution will be proposed presently.

Mr. MASSEY.—I think it would save time and would meet the convenience of honourable members present to-day if the resolutions were proposed forthwith in order to prevent discussion being duplicated.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—When I have finished speaking I will undertake to have a resolution proposed. I want now to point out what the position is in this matter of adjournment. It will mean a delay of about a month in submitting the Public Works Statement. If we had met at the ordinary time—that is, the last week in June—you would not have had the Public Works Statement before about the beginning of November, whereas if Parliament prorogues until the 30th September an effort will be made to have the Public Works Statement before the end of November. That is a safe way of putting it. But suppose it was the end of November, in any case it would be only about a month beyond the ordinary time for getting the Public Works Statement. In the natural course of things we should have to carry on our public works—such as railways, roads, and bridges for the requirements of the people of the country—without fresh authorisations by Parliament until the Public Works Statement came down in November. Now, if it is in the minds of any section of this House that there is going to be undue delay or interference with the work of the country in that respect, any such apprehension should be at once dismissed for the reason that, as is well known to the honourable members of the House who are familiar with the procedure here, the Government of the country, by taking a further authorisation, such as we would require to do for financial purposes and to obtain supplies, could carry on until Parliament gave us in the summer session a new authorisation to continue to the date to which we carry those works on. So that there is comparatively no dislocation in any way at all, nor was there any on the former occasion. But leaving that practical side of the matter for a moment, let me point out what it means as regards legislation. There are half a dozen very important questions that require to be dealt with during the next session of Parliament. I have no hesitation whatever in saying that that work can be done in the time at our disposal during the session of Parliament, even though a short one, in time for us to get home well before Christmas. Indeed, even if a vote of want of confidence were proposed, it could be dealt with, put out of the road, and the ordinary work of the session completed without any difficulty. Moreover, as honourable gentlemen may be aware, the great bulk of the legislation passed during any session of Parliament does not become law until the 1st January of the year following. From the point of view of carrying on the public-works expenditure there is but a short delay; and from the point of view of meeting the legislative requirements of the country this Dominion is not going to be one week behind through an adjournment till the end of September, because in any case the laws do not come into operation until the 1st January of the following year. There can be no such thing as an injury being done to the people in that respect. As already explained, even if we sat on from now, any measures passed would not become law until January. I feel satisfied that the Legislature can put through a reasonable session's work during the months of October, November, and part of December, because it has been done before, and we can do it again, and without difficulty. I desire to emphasize the fact that if we went right on our legislation would become effective only in January next—just the same time as if we passed it in November. I merely want to point this out to the honourable gentlemen who are present, so that when considering this important matter we may thoroughly understand where we are. I want to be frank, and I have asked my old friend the Hon. Mr. Duncan to move a resolution when I have concluded, because I do not think I should move the resolution myself, for the reason that I am presiding over this meeting, and in that respect the position is unique and somewhat peculiar. I thought it best not to ask any one to preside over honourable members, and I therefore asked Mr. Duncan if he would move the motion, and I will now make way for him to do so. In conclusion, let me say that I realise the inconvenience of the position just as well as honourable members, and I am sorry that it should have arisen. I want again to affirm the fact that the New Zealand Government is not responsible for the situation now before us—that is, for the date fixed for the Imperial Conference. It is obvious that the reason for holding it in July is that that is the time when the British Government are making up their proposed naval expenditure for submission to the House of Commons, and that is the reason, I should imagine, why the matter has been fixed for the end of July, although personally I should, of course, have preferred it being later; but we, as I have said, have had nothing to do with the time for calling the Imperial Conference together. I can only, in conclusion, thank the honourable gentlemen of both branches of the Legislature for their courtesy in coming here and for coming at considerable inconvenience to themselves. They will, I am sure, realise the difficult position in which the Government was placed owing to our inability to convene Parliament at an earlier date than the 10th instant. I have

placed before you this matter fairly, and I have endeavoured to show you the responsibility attaching to New Zealand and to the Old Country, and our relationship in connection with that responsibility. That we must realise to the fullest possible extent. We may, of course, have differences in detail, but not in respect to the principles I have placed before you. It is of the first importance not to New Zealand alone, but to the English-speaking peoples throughout the world, and also to the peoples of other nations, that we should try to preserve the peace of the world; and the only practical and sensible way of accomplishing that is to see that the greatest sea-Power in the world—that is, the British—is maintained in its fullest efficiency. Our sea-power should be so strong as to remove the possibility of destructive attack or disastrous encounter, and by accepting our share as a portion of the Imperial Empire we shall help to increase that strength; we shall assuredly add to the power and greatness of the Empire; we shall help to continue the flying of the old flag: and I am confident that by having a great navy, more powerful than that of any continental country—by such a course we are insuring the peace of the world at large.

The Hon. Mr. T. DUNCAN (Oamaru).—Sir Joseph Ward and gentlemen,—It is only a few minutes since the resolution which I have here was put into my hands to propose, but I may tell the Assembly that I am very pleased it has been done, because I heartily concur in every word in it, and I believe that all the right-thinking members in this Assembly will agree with me. The resolution is as follows:—

“That this meeting of members of the House, recognising the vital importance to the Empire of the impending Naval Conference, considers it necessary that New Zealand should be represented at such Conference, and that in view of the important part New Zealand proposes to take in Imperial naval defence such representation should be by the Prime Minister of New Zealand. This meeting further considers that, as this is the first session of a new Parliament, it is expedient that the Prime Minister should be in his place to explain the policy of his Government to the House, and that therefore Parliament should, after making the necessary financial arrangements to enable the business of the country to be carried on, be prorogued until the thirtieth day of September next.”

I hope that resolution will all be agreed to unanimously, without any attempt being made to introduce party warfare. I think we should all be above that. If you agree to that resolution I need hardly say more; but I would just like to say that from the first I, as one of the members of Parliament, indorsed the action of the Government in this matter. I knew that it was an occasion when New Zealand should take her place and show, as heretofore, that she was watching what was happening in the Old Country, and was prepared, when any difficulty arose, to be there as a support, as far as either men or money was concerned—or Dreadnoughts either, if you like to put it in that way. And there is no doubt that is the feeling all over New Zealand at the present day, with very few exceptions. There is no question of the work of Parliament being put back in any way by the short adjournment. I am certain that we can quite easily do all the legislation that is required from the 30th September to the end of December and be home for our Christmas dinner. You can make ready in a very short time for the Premier to go and be there at the opening of the Conference. And I am quite certain that it will be an epoch in the history of this country, as well as in the Old World, that this Conference should be held, because it will show the world that the British Empire is not divided, and that is the main thing that we have to depend upon. We, as citizens of this Dominion, have to protect our seaboard, and it would be a sorry day for us if some foreign nation had control of the seas. Such a nation could stop our traffic, and then we would not be able to send our produce to the Old Country, and we should not be able to pay off our indebtedness without sending produce to pay it. Therefore it is of vital importance to us that Great Britain should have command of the seas. There can be no doubt about that. I shall not speak further on this subject, but will leave it to others who may be more fluent than myself. I will now conclude by moving the motion I have read.

Mr. MASSEY (Leader of the Opposition).—I want, if honourable members will give me the opportunity, to ask the Right Hon. the Premier whether he has given us the whole of the correspondence which has passed between the Imperial Government and the New Zealand Government with regard to the proposed Conference. I do not think he has; but, if he has, will he have it printed and circulated prior to the discussion being taken? I do not think I am making an unreasonable request. It can be printed in an hour or two, and it would be a convenience for every member to have the correspondence prior to expressing his opinions thereon.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—In reply, I should like to say that I have given the whole of the correspondence that is not confidential. Confidential correspondence I certainly decline to give. I want to make that absolutely clear. Some people may not respect confidential communications, and may think they ought to be given; but I will not disclose anything that is of a confidential character in this or any other matter to the House or to any one. It is my duty not to do so, and I shall not deviate from it. Regarding the request that the correspondence should be printed, I shall be glad to have it printed; but I think in the meantime we should go on. I want us to meet again at half past seven to-night, and, if I can, I will get the correspondence printed and circulated in the interval; if not, I will lay it upon the table of the House, after Parliament assembles. I think the question may be confined within very small limits: Is the country to be represented at the Conference; and, if so, is it to be represented by the Prime Minister, and is Parliament to prorogue to enable him to do so? These are the two issues we want an opinion upon at the present time.

Mr. J. ALLEN.—Why did you not put that plainly in the resolution?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Well, the resolution that has been passed is intended to meet it.

Mr. MASSEY.—By way of explanation—and I may make another explanation presently—I should like to remind the honourable gentleman that we have not had the whole of the correspond-

ence. There is one letter—to my mind, an exceedingly important one—which has been omitted from the speech the honourable gentleman has just made. It was referred to the other day in the Australian Parliament, and I will quote a reference to it: “A cable received by the Secretary of State for the Colonies stated that the New Zealand Government earnestly desire to attend the Conference, but pointed out the impossibility for its Minister to be present until the new Parliament had been convened and voted supplies.” Now, I can hardly think that the letter there referred to should be considered confidential. It has reference to the business of Parliament and—

An Hon. MEMBER.—It was read.

Mr. MASSEY.—No.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Pardon me, I read it. It is not a letter, but a telegram. I read it, and it is among the correspondence printed and circulated to honourable members.

Mr. MASSEY.—I watched for it very closely, and I failed to notice that particular cablegram when the honourable gentleman was reading it. Let me make the position perfectly clear. It is a communication from the New Zealand Government to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, pointing out that New Zealand desired earnestly to attend the Conference, but that it was impossible for its Ministers to be present unless the new Parliament had been convened and voted supplies. If the communication referred to—whether in the shape of a letter or a cablegram—was read by the honourable gentleman it must have been very short, and I do not think I am asking too much in desiring that it should be read again.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I read it.

Mr. MASSEY.—And the suggestion I have to make is this: I presume that this meeting will adjourn at half past five. I suggest that the discussion should be continued when we meet again at half past seven, or at whatever hour is agreed upon. And it is only right to say that, like Mr. Duncan, I had not the very faintest idea of the course that was to be taken or of the proposals that it was intended to submit.

Mr. FISHER (Wellington Central).—Before you reply, I was going to suggest that you should give members of the conference a copy of the telegram sent to the newspaper Press. I, for my part, see no reason why an interjection from Mr. T. E. Taylor should deprive the members of this assemblage of that information, and I would suggest that the telegram should be printed with the other correspondence. A mere little passage-at-arms between the Prime Minister and the honourable member for Christchurch North ought not to deprive us of access to the information to which I think we are entitled.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I read the telegram that has been referred to. It is dated the 6th May. Regarding the suggestion of the member for Wellington Central that I should remove “Confidential” from any confidential communication, I say that no person could hold the position I occupy if he started that sort of business. If I did so, there are lots of people in this country who would not be very safe. It is only right to say that, because I receive communications from people of all classes of politics, and from all over the country—communications of a very confidential nature, and which are sent to me by them only because the senders know that they are safe in intrusting me with their confidence. And I have some communications in my possession from people in New Zealand and elsewhere that are not marked “Confidential”; but where I think they are intended to be of a confidential nature, and I think I ought not to make use of them, I do not do so. I am not going to take “Confidential” off any communication, and I should be surprised if any one seriously intended I should do so.

Mr. FISHER.—The only reason I raised the point was this: that the honourable gentleman raised the question of the removal of the word “Confidential” from the telegram, and that was said upon an interjection of the member for Christchurch North.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—No, I did not.

Mr. FISHER.—You said you were going to ask the House to allow you to divulge the nature of that confidential telegram, and that was after the interjection of the member for Christchurch North.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—No; I said “No.”

Mr. FISHER.—Those were the words that floated up here.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I want to make the position clear. I do not want to put the position wrongly either in regard to the member for Christchurch North or myself. I was referring to a telegram that I had sent to the editors of the papers throughout the country which was marked “Strictly confidential” and in connection with the action of one newspaper in the country and Mr. Taylor said, “Read the wire.” The honourable member for Christchurch North said that he would read it if I would not. There is nothing in that telegram that I am afraid of.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—Why did you make it strictly confidential?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I had good reason for making it confidential.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—Oh!

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—The honourable gentleman may assume it was not so, but I had good reasons. All my colleagues saw the telegram before it was sent, and knew its contents; and we all have ordinary common-sense, and we believed it was right, otherwise it would not have been sent. There is no doubt about that. As a matter of fact, what is wrong is the fact that one man should have referred to it in public when it was addressed to him and marked “Strictly confidential.”

An Hon. MEMBER.—What was wrong was in making it confidential.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Not at all.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR (Christchurch North).—May I ask the Premier whether any of the confidential despatches or documents which he admits have been received, but which he has not placed before members, refer to the Naval Conference, or whether they refer to that special matter that the Prime Minister told us the Government knew of when they made the Dreadnought offer? The

Government, he said, were aware of one matter that has not been published in the Press. I want to know whether the confidential communication that has been withheld from this conference refers to that particular matter, and whether it contains any reference to the Naval Conference and the question of who shall represent the Dominion at that Conference. What is the nature of the despatch?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I do not know what the honourable gentleman's idea is. I decline to answer anything regarding what is confidential. I want to say, without breach of confidence, that the offer made by the Government was a spontaneous offer, unsolicited by the British Government. We made it on our own responsibility for reasons which we believed justifiable. We accept the full responsibility. Anything that is confidential I decline to disclose, nor should I be asked to do so.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—Cannot the right honourable gentleman tell us, without disclosing details, whether any of the despatches refer to some grave matter which is still kept a secret between the British Government and the New Zealand Government, and whether any despatch that has been kept from this conference refers to the Premier's personal effort to represent the Dominion?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I decline to answer any questions of the kind.

Mr. MASSEY (Franklin).—Sir Joseph Ward and gentlemen,—In speaking to the motion which was moved prior to the dinner adjournment by the Hon. Mr. Duncan, I may say at once that it is not my intention to speak at any great length. I intend to speak as concisely as I possibly can, and on that account I hope to be able to make my points more clearly and perhaps more effectively than any that were made by the right honourable gentleman who opened this debate. Now, Sir, I notice that the proceedings of this meeting are being reported by members of the *Hansard* staff. To that being done I shall not offer the slightest objection. I think the utmost publicity that we can possibly give them should be given to the proceedings of this meeting. But what I am anxious about is this: I am anxious that this meeting should not be in any way identified with an ordinary meeting of Parliament. This is not a meeting of Parliament, but a meeting of members of Parliament convened by the Prime Minister, and we are here, in the first place, to show courtesy to the Imperial Government, who have forwarded an invitation to the New Zealand Government asking that the country should be represented at the Imperial Defence Conference intended to be held in London in the near future. In the second place, we are here out of courtesy to the Prime Minister, who has forwarded an invitation to individual members of Parliament to meet him this afternoon. But, gentlemen, while this is the case, I hope that later on there will be no attempt made to validate the proceedings of this meeting by Parliament itself, because what is being done this afternoon and evening is not in any way binding on Parliament or on any individual member thereof. The honourable gentleman when he was speaking—I was able only to make a few very rough notes—seemed to suggest on the part of those who do not agree with him a tendency to underrate the importance of the coming Imperial Conference. Let me tell honourable gentlemen that, speaking for myself—and I think I can also speak for the members who sit around me—we do not underrate the importance of the coming Conference in the very slightest. We all know that important events have taken place in European politics during the last few months, and that in consequence of those important events it has become necessary for Britain and for the self-governing colonies of the Empire to recast their naval policy. The question is, what is best to be done under the circumstances? And let me say here that there is no necessity for heroics, or hysteria, or theatrical displays. The latter are all very well in times of peace, but they are of very little use when, as Kipling says, "the guns begin to shoot"; and that is the time for which this country and for which the different countries of the British Empire have to prepare. We have to prepare not only to defend our own country, but to assist the Empire to which we belong in maintaining its supremacy. Now, gentlemen, the Prime Minister this afternoon had a great deal to say about the policy of this Government. I would ask the right honourable gentleman, and any member of this House who has had a long experience of parliamentary life, to tell us what is the defence policy of this country. Does any one know it? Have we a defence policy? I ask the right honourable gentleman, when he replies—as I have no doubt he will—to take the opportunity of telling us what is the defence policy of this Government. I challenge him to do it. I do not know what the defence policy of this country is, and I have been here five Parliaments—I am now commencing the sixth—and I assert that there is no country in the British dominions which has expended so much money in proportion to its population on defence, and which has so little to show for it, as the country to which we belong; and I am ashamed to have to say it. There is no country so absolutely undefended as New Zealand is at the present moment. It is no use mincing matters; we have got to get down to bed-rock and face the position, and I hope that it will be part of the business of the coming session to consider how we can best put the country to which we belong in a state of defence. As Lord Beresford says, that is the best way to assist the Empire to which we belong, and I sincerely hope that when the opportunity comes along—I hope that it will come soon—we shall be able to do it. I hope that when the next war-cloud comes along we shall be able to do something better for the Empire, and something better for ourselves, than offering a Dreadnought or Dreadnoughts, which we have to ask Britain for the money to pay for. The people of this country are loyal and enthusiastic, and they are willing to make any sacrifice on behalf of the Empire to which they belong, whether that sacrifice takes the form of men or of money. We have done it before, and are prepared to do it again; but what we ask for, and what we are entitled to get, is a strong and intelligent lead in connection with defence matters. And the position—and I challenge any one to deny it—shows that in connection with defence matters we have never yet had a strong and intelligent lead in this country. It seemed to me while I was listening to the honourable gentleman this afternoon in the course of the long speech which he made, and in which he wandered all over the subject from Dan to Beersheba, he introduced a lot of irrelevant matter which had nothing to do with the points under discussion, but which will have the effect—

and I believe were intended to have the effect—of clouding the real issue. What is the real issue? There are really two. The first point is whether the Hon. the Prime Minister is going Home to represent us at the Defence Conference. The next is one I will deal with later on. I take it that we who represent the people and who are assembled here to-day are all at one on the point that New Zealand should be properly and adequately represented at the Defence Conference which is intended to be held in London at the end of next July. But in listening to what the honourable gentleman said this afternoon I came to the conclusion that he had made up his mind to go Home—that he felt he had a majority of members of Parliament behind him, and he was going Home to represent us at the Imperial Defence Conference. Well, I will say this: that I should like to see him in his place during the coming session. I had looked forward to seeing him there, as I wanted to do some plain talking to the right honourable gentleman. I wanted to call him to account for the sins and shortcomings of the Government from my point of view, and from the point of view of many of the people of this country; and, though I looked forward to doing so with a very great deal of pleasure, I am willing to give up that pleasure and allow the honourable gentleman to go Home and represent New Zealand at the Defence Conference, and I shall not raise the very slightest objection to his so doing. The other point is a good deal more important: whether the business of Parliament should be postponed. The right honourable gentleman quoted a precedent. He quoted that precedent established in 1897, and he asked the intelligent representatives of the people of this country to believe that the position now is parallel to the position in 1897. Why, I should have thought that the very dullest intellect not only among the people sitting in this building, but among the people outside, would have seen that there was absolutely no analogy between the position now and that of 1897. I was here in 1897, and what I said then has been quoted, and I am prepared to stand by every word of it. I do not go back upon a single sentence of it. What was the position in 1897? One of the most unique events in British history—such an event as had never happened previously, and may not happen again for centuries: the Diamond Jubilee of one of the wisest sovereigns that has ever sat upon the British throne. It was not an ordinary event—it was a great Imperial celebration. Invitations were forwarded from the Imperial Parliament to every British colony and dependency, and those invitations were accepted. We sent the Right Hon. the Prime Minister at that time—Mr. Seddon—to represent us, and we sent a body of troops with him representative of our local defence forces; and I believe we were well represented. But in other respects was the position the same as it is now? In 1897 there was not a cloud on the horizon. The country was prosperous; money was plentiful, employment was plentiful. I wish I could say that was the position now. Unfortunately, that is not the case, and I am sorry for the individual who does not see the difference between the position now and the position as it was in 1897. I supported the Right Hon. the Prime Minister at that time in going Home to represent us at the Diamond Jubilee, and the session was postponed not altogether because the Prime Minister would be absent from the colony, but out of compliment to the Sovereign and the Imperial Government. I would do the same again. I was right then, and I say that I am right now, and those who think with me are right in the course we are taking. I say that the business of the country should be proceeded with in spite of the right honourable gentleman going Home. I am aware that he quoted precedents, but I tell him that the balance of precedent is against him. Those who are acquainted with the history of this country will remember that Sir Edward Stafford, who was Prime Minister about 1875 or 1876, when most important questions were before the Parliament of the country—questions of tremendous importance—the proposed abolition of the provinces, for instance—in spite of that fact, in spite of that great question being under the consideration of Parliament, Sir Edward Stafford went Home to London, and was absent for many months, and that, too, at a time when there was no cable or steam communication, and the business of Parliament went on in his absence; and very properly so. Many members of this House will remember that Sir Julius Vogel went Home to represent this country; or, rather, I should say he went Home in connection with the financial affairs of the country. He was absent for about twelve months, and a session of Parliament took place during that time. Now, so far as I am able to discover there was not a single suggestion that the business of Parliament should stand over, and that it should not be proceeded with in the usual way. Coming to a later period, many members who are here to-night will remember that in 1902 there was another Imperial Conference, and the late Mr. Seddon went Home. He did not attempt to close Parliament up, but, on the contrary, he left his first lieutenant in charge, and who will say now that the business of that session was not conducted satisfactorily? I heard the Speaker at that time say from the chair at the close of the session—and it must be on record, although I have not looked it up—and he was a man of long experience, longer than any other man in the political life of the country—that the business of that session had been conducted more satisfactorily than ever previously in the whole of his long experience as a politician, and he had been in Parliament forty years. He was absolutely correct; and what was done then in the absence of the Premier can be done again. The Right Hon. the Premier tells us, or at least he says in effect, that he is going Home to represent New Zealand at the Imperial Conference—that it is necessary he should go, because he is the only man in New Zealand fit and able to represent New Zealand. Then he follows that up by saying that if he goes Home the session must not be proceeded with as usual, thus again practically saying that there is not a single member in the party, not one of his colleagues, fit to conduct the business of Parliament, fit to lead in his absence. What a compliment to his senior colleague, Mr. Carroll! What a compliment to Mr. Millar! What a compliment even to the junior member of the Ministry, Mr. Thomas Mackenzie!

An Hon. MEMBER.—He is all right.

Mr. MASSEY.—Of course he is all right. He looks perfectly happy for the first time during the last ten years. The Right Hon. the Premier had a very great deal to say about putting this matter above party. Now, I would like to see him place it above party; but his actions do not

fit in with his words. We offer him the opportunity to go Home, and at the same time allow the affairs of the country to proceed in his absence; but he objects to the latter. Why? It is because he cannot trust his own party—for party reasons. By so doing—by taking up that position—he is placing the interests of party—I do not say his own individual interests, because I do not think so—he is placing the interests of party above Imperialism, above the interests of Empire, of which we have heard so much here to-night. I would remind the right honourable gentleman of the saying of a former colleague of his which impressed itself on my mind at the time, and which I have had occasion to remember on more than one occasion since. The expression was used one afternoon during the last session of Parliament, when we were discussing the resignation of certain officers connected with the Agricultural Department, and when we were rather finding fault with the then Minister of Agriculture for allowing valuable officials to leave this country without making an effort to keep them here. In reply to criticisms not only by myself, but by members on the Government side, the then Minister of Agriculture used this expression: “No man is indispensable.” And, gentlemen, if the Prime Minister went out of Parliament, and I went out of Parliament, and half a dozen other prominent members went out, I venture to say that the business of this country would be just as well conducted and the interests of the people would be just as well looked after as has ever been the case. Then, we have got to remember all the expense and inconvenience connected with the second session of Parliament. We know what it means, and it is useless denying that by agreeing to a second session of Parliament you are putting this country to a great deal of unnecessary cost, and many of its people to a very great deal of unnecessary inconvenience. The honourable gentleman this afternoon, speaking of what was likely to happen in connection with public-works matters, reminded me of how the proposal would affect the pioneers up in the back-blocks, on whose behalf we are in the habit of voting sums of money for the purposes of making roads and bridges. Why, members representing country districts know perfectly well that under ordinary circumstances the Public Works Statement and estimates come down too late to have the money voted by Parliament properly expended during the remainder of the year, and we are told when we find fault with the Government for not having expended the money that there was not time—that in the time available it was impossible to get a sufficient number of men to spend the money. But what will happen if this postponement is agreed to? And now I appeal to the back-block members. We shall have the Public Works Statement and estimates coming down in December, as we had them once before in a summer session. You know perfectly well that the Public Works Statement and estimates never come down until the dying hours of the session. They will be brought down in December; the Appropriation Bill will pass at the end of the session; we shall have the Christmas and New Year holidays, and by the time the authorities are issued it will be February, and perhaps even later, and it will be absolutely impossible, if the public-works estimates are kept back in the way indicated, to expend the money and to do justice to those people for whose benefit the money is voted by the representatives of the people. The honourable gentleman had a good deal to say about the Dreadnought. I thought that was a side issue. I would have preferred discussing this matter in Parliament, and I say at once that I do not intend to discuss it at any length now; but there were just one or two opinions expressed by the honourable gentleman which I simply cannot pass over. I say this, and I speak as a loyalist and Imperialist, and as one whose loyalty and Imperialism will stand any test which may be applied to them, and who has proved his loyalty and Imperialism in a manner of which I am not going to boast on the present occasion. Speaking of the Dreadnought, I say this—and I can look back dispassionately on what happened: if there was a crisis to justify the committing of the Dominion to the expenditure of four millions of money, then Parliament should have been convened. I have said it in public before, and I say it now, and I am prepared to take the consequences of the opinion I am expressing; and on this point I am speaking for myself, because I know there are men sitting round me who do not hold exactly the same opinion that I hold, but who are anxious as I am to do their duty and to do everything they possibly can for the Empire to which we belong. But I am glad to think that I am not the only one of this opinion, that there are thousands of people in this country holding exactly the same opinion as I do on this subject, who put the Empire before family, and kindred, and self-interest, and the possession of wealth and everything else that man holds dear; and holding those opinions, and actuated by those principles, I say that under the circumstances the proper thing to have done would have been to have convened Parliament, and given Parliament the opportunity of saying what assistance should be rendered and what form it should take—whether it should take the form of a battleship or battleships, or the form of a permanent subsidy. The honourable gentleman asks us to raise this question above party. I stand here to-night, as you all know, in the responsible position of being the leader of one of the great political parties of State, a party nearly equal in numbers to the Government party. Though its representatives are in a minority in Parliament, still I venture to say that the members of the Opposition in this Parliament represent nearly, if not quite, half the inhabitants of the Dominion, and I ask, if the honourable gentleman had wanted to raise the question above party, what was his duty under the circumstances? Was it not his duty to consult the leader of the other great party? And, further, I say this: that the leader of the other party would have been only too glad to have come to his assistance, and to have given his advice, and to have assisted him in every possible way—glad of an opportunity of helping the great Empire to which we belong. If he had done that he would certainly have raised the question above party; but he did not do it. He scored, or attempted to score, off his own bat, and I wish him joy of all the credit he is likely to receive for it. Now, Sir, I want to deal with the second point, though perhaps not at any length. We all know, gentlemen, members of the House of Representatives—we all know that this session there are exceedingly important matters to be dealt with. I do not wish to enumerate them all, but what about the position into which the Civil Service has drifted? I am not going to enlarge upon that at present, though I hope the time will come when we shall have an opportunity of dealing with it

very thoroughly and exhaustively. Then there is the question of the financial position of the country—the providing of ways and means for public works. I am not quite sure whether that is intended to be done during the session of Parliament that is to meet next Thursday; but it has to be done. And I regret to say that for the first time in my parliamentary career there is also the question of finding employment for the people who have no employment at the present time. Then there is the matter of dealing with that great and important subject in which the whole country is interested, the settlement of the Native-land question. These are only some of the subjects that require to be dealt with, only some of the questions that Parliament should have an opportunity of dealing with during the next few weeks, and which should make the coming session one of the most important that has ever been held in this country. Then, as I have good reason to know, because I am in contact with all sorts and conditions of people, there are many people throughout the country who are intensely annoyed and disappointed at the very suggestion that the business of the country should be postponed for three months in order to enable the Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward to attend the Imperial Conference. I want to make my position clear—perfectly clear. The right honourable gentleman admitted this afternoon that the Opposition Press had been generous to him in connection with defence matters. I know they have been generous, particularly generous, to the honourable gentleman, and I am proud of it; but I cannot say the same of the Ministerial Press in their treatment of me. Not that I care for that, for it is rather a compliment to receive abuse from certain quarters; but I do not like misrepresentation, and as I say, I want to make my position clear, and also the position of my colleagues. The position we take up is simply and briefly this: We think the colony should be represented at the Conference; there is no difficulty about that; and we are quite willing the colony should be represented by the Defence Minister, who is also Prime Minister. And here I would just wish to quote—and it was quoted, or, at all events, a very similar communication was quoted, by the right honourable gentleman—I shall quote the invitation forwarded by Mr. Asquith to the Australian Government. I am not going to quote the whole, only a few lines. Mr. Asquith begins by saying it is to be a subsidiary Conference. That is not a very important point, because it may be subsidiary and yet called upon to deal with some very important matters. But he goes on,—

“I assume that, as the consultation will be generally upon technical or quasi-technical naval and military matters, the Governments of the self-governing dominions will elect to be represented, as in the case of Canada, by their Minister of Defence, or, failing them, by some other member of the Government, assisted by an expert to advise; but it is entirely for the Government of Australia to decide the precise form of its representation. The Conference will be of a purely consultative character and will be held in private, and its deliberations will be assisted by the presence of members or other expert advisers of his Majesty's Government.”

That is in effect the same invitation as was forwarded to the Government of New Zealand, and which was read this afternoon by the Prime Minister. And there it speaks clearly for itself. It invites New Zealand to send representatives to the Imperial Conference, but it says those representatives are to be the Defence Minister and experts upon military matters. Very well. The honourable gentleman is Defence Minister, and, if he wants to go, I think, after reading the communications with the Australian Government, and after hearing similar communications read this afternoon, he should go. I go the length of saying that I think the Defence Minister, Sir Joseph Ward, should go to the Conference. But is it to be said that every time a Defence Conference is held in London the business of this country must be postponed in consequence? Is there one man who will say so? I sincerely hope any such proposal will not be agreed to. We are anxious, as I said, that the ordinary business of the country should be proceeded with, and I hope that the Prime Minister, before he leaves this country, will give us some idea of the lines he will take at the Imperial Conference, where he will be our representative. But, speaking for myself, and speaking on general lines, I say that it is the first duty of every country belonging to the British Empire to contribute to the maintenance of the Imperial navy in proportion to its population and in proportion to its position. And I say New Zealand is prepared to do so. We are willing to do our duty, and we are willing to do more than our duty. Then, and perhaps not of less importance, there is the question of local defence. We have got to put our local defence into proper condition, as I think, by a system of national training. Let us pay a proper contribution to the Imperial navy. Why, the honourable gentleman incidentally mentioned this afternoon what was done by South Africa. I think we all know that some years ago Cape Colony presented a cruiser-battleship to Great Britain. It was only some seven or eight years ago. And that ship, the “Good Hope,” was at the time one of the best war-ships afloat. She is a long way from being one of the best ships afloat now. But would it not have been very much better if South Africa had made some arrangement of a more permanent nature in respect to the Imperial navy? Most certainly it would. The war-ship will become obsolete before very long, but the payment of interest on the cost of the vessel will go on for all time. The presentation of that war-ship has made it impossible for the Cape Government to make an arrangement with the Imperial Government for the payment of a proper annual contribution to the Imperial navy. There is just one other point, and that is what the honourable gentleman said with reference to the payment of a sinking fund of 1 per cent. That is contrary to the statement the honourable gentleman made some time ago—namely, that it was his intention that the people of this generation should pay for the battleship given to the Imperial navy. How long would it take a payment of 1 per cent. to wipe off the capital expenditure? I have not gone into it carefully, but it would take not far short of fifty years. I think I am right, speaking from memory, in saying that it would at the ordinary rate of interest take forty-four years to wipe out the expenditure at 1 per cent. What is the life of a battleship? Is it forty years? Is it twenty years? Is it fifteen years? I venture to say fifteen years, under existing circumstances, is the outside life of a battleship; and, that being the case, I say it should be our duty to provide a sufficient sinking fund to pay off the cost of the battleship, at the outside,

in fifteen years. I think I have dealt with most of the points raised by the Prime Minister this afternoon. I have put the position from my point of view. Every member is responsible to his constituents in the same way as I am responsible to mine, but so long as I remain in Parliament I intend to state my position clearly, to express my opinions as I form them. The position, so far as the Parliament and people of this country are concerned, is clear, plain, and straightforward: there is no possible doubt about it. And just because it is clear, plain, and straightforward, and because there is no difficulty or objection to the right honourable gentleman going Home, I say the business of the House and the business of the country—most important, most serious business—which is waiting for consideration should be proceeded with in the ordinary way. I hope the right honourable gentleman will adhere to the promise he made prior to the dinner adjournment, to the effect that the motion proposed by Mr. Duncan will be divided—that we shall be able to vote for it in parts: take the first part by itself—that is, the question of the right honourable gentleman going Home—and then take the second part by itself, which I consider, and I think most honourable members will consider, far the more important of the two—the question whether the business is to be postponed for three months.

The Hon. Mr. T. DUNCAN.—I object to the motion being divided.

Mr. MASSEY.—Then, if the honourable gentleman objects I take it as a breach of faith on the part of his leader, the Prime Minister. The right honourable gentleman is responsible. A breach of faith may be nothing to the member for Lyttelton, who has interjected, but it is to the ordinary member of Parliament and to most of the people.

Mr. LAURENSEN.—Oh, I will deal with you very shortly.

Mr. MASSEY.—The honourable gentleman will be fully occupied in using the whip on the Government supporters.

Mr. LAURENSEN.—I will use it on you, my boy.

Mr. MASSEY.—Let me emphasize this point: The Prime Minister, from his place in this chamber, and speaking as Prime Minister, gave a definite promise that the motion would be divided. It is on record. We expect the right honourable gentleman to adhere to his promise as an honourable man and leader of the House. And I want the people of the country to understand, in spite of the position taken up by the Hon. Mr. Duncan, who proposed the motion, that a breach of faith will be committed if he does not do so.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—May I ask whether the despatch—

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I am not going to answer questions. I am not here to answer questions. I came here to make a statement to the gentlemen who have assembled and to hear the opinions of members, and I am not in the position of being examined as a witness, and I do not intend to be put in that position by any one. I have avoided anything in the shape of feeling, but I am certainly not going to be categorically examined.

Mr. HARDY (Selwyn).—What about the promise you made this afternoon?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I have not reversed it in any way.

Mr. HARDY.—I am glad to hear it.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR (Christchurch North).—I think that there has been an unnecessary amount of feeling displayed on certain points in the speeches both of the Premier and the leader of the Opposition. We were told distinctly, when the Premier started to speak this afternoon, that this conference was not one for the purpose of discussing the matter of the Dreadnought offer, which would come up before Parliament in the ordinary course, and that the opinions of members would properly find expression on the main question being debated later on. Under these circumstances it seems to me that the points to be dealt with by this conference are not matters for anything approaching warmth or personal feeling. What I asked the Premier seemed to me a perfectly legitimate question, and I did not see why it should not have been answered at once. The Premier said that a despatch promised by Lord Crewe in reply to the Government's offer of a Dreadnought or two had not turned up. That strikes me as a very remarkable thing, because plenty of time has elapsed to permit of that despatch reaching New Zealand, and I was going to ask whether the British Government has been advised that that despatch is missing. It seemed to me to be a quite reasonable question, and I was not asking it with the view of embarrassing the Premier in any way. I was much interested in the Premier's statement that the provision for the repayment of the Dreadnought loan—which, by the way, I think, will never be floated, because the boat will never be given—was to be by means of a sinking fund of 1 per cent. I do not believe there is anybody at this conference who has not got the feeling that the Naval Conference is being held in order to get rid of the embarrassment caused to the Liberal party in Britain by the offer, unasked for, by our Government of one or two Dreadnoughts, and the evidence in support of this suggestion will probably be found in the concealed despatches alluded to by the Premier. I do not propose to discuss the Dreadnought offer at any length now, but there are one or two points that seem to be important at this stage. I asked the question some time this afternoon whether this conference had been given the whole of the despatches that had passed between this Government and the Imperial Government in regard to the Dreadnought offer and with regard to the Naval Conference, and the reply was that the Government will not disclose confidential despatches. Well, now, there has not been a single word said to show that any aspect of either of these matters was such that they should form the subject of confidential despatches, and I can see very great danger to any country, and much more to a democracy like New Zealand, if the Government of the day is to be permitted to conceal from Parliament—which is really the master of the Ministry—State documents simply by marking them "Confidential." Parliament might easily be converted into a perfect puppet-show if the practice is allowed to grow up of the Government of the day concealing despatches, that surely belong as much to Parliament as to the Cabinet, by marking them "Private and confidential." I recognise that the Prime Minister must, of necessity, be permitted to carry on certain communications that are not to be made known to the world. But we have not had a

single suggestion that anything in connection with the Dreadnought offer or with the Naval Conference called for secret despatches; yet the Premier admits that there have been such despatches, and he says we are not going to have them. Now, I should have liked to have asked—and I would have asked if I had had any chance of getting an answer—whether any of these concealed despatches were couched in such terms as to force from the Imperial Government a personal invitation addressed to the Premier to attend the Naval Conference. I am asking that question because of the fact that in the invitation to the Naval Conference the author of it, the Right Hon. Mr. Asquith, went out of his way to make it clear that he did not want to be embarrassed with Premiers at this particular Conference. It is a subsidiary Conference. The fact that the Imperial Conference will be due in 1911 was referred to. It is true the suggestion was that the Minister of Defence should go, but immediately after this paragraph in the invitation Mr. Asquith in his despatch was careful to say that “it is, of course, entirely a matter for the Government”—I am quoting the same despatch now—“to determine what the character of the representation should be.” I am sure that we ought to have had the whole of the despatches. There is another feature of the discussion which has been forced on us to-day that strikes me as being almost ludicrous. We are told that Parliament must decide who is to go to this Conference. Now, that is a very remarkable concession to Parliament. It is comforting to know that there are some things that Parliament has a right to decide, and that it is not yet regarded by the Cabinet as a superfluity. It was perfectly superfluous when the Dominion was being committed to an expenditure of from two to four millions sterling, but the whole Parliament can be assembled when the minor matter has to be determined as to whether the Minister of Defence, or the High Commissioner, or who else shall represent this Dominion at a subsidiary Conference for the discussion of technical and quasi-technical questions connected with Imperial defence. I look upon it as being a most extraordinary position that in the one case Parliament was completely ignored, and in the other case the whole of the Parliament is being assembled to deal with a matter that I hold should be dealt with by the Cabinet without any reference to this meeting at all. Do you mean to tell me, gentlemen, that the mere appointment of a delegate is a matter that the Cabinet has no power to deal with? It is an absolutely trivial matter, and we ought not to be assembled here to deal with that question. The Government have power to make all appointments, whether they are to the Civil Service or whether they are to a conference. Is there a member on either side of the House who will assert that there is any excuse for Parliament being assembled for the present purpose, while not a single attempt at consultation was made when we were being pledged to contribute four millions sterling to the cost of war-ships? There are one or two other questions that I will ask, though I do not know whether I will get them answered. I want to know why this telegram to the editors of newspapers was marked “Private and strictly confidential.” And there is one point about this telegram that I want to call the Premier’s attention to. Until I said I had this telegram there was not a word said by the Premier to-day that the Cabinet had any information that justified the Dreadnought offer other than what had been disclosed in the public Press of this country; but the very moment this telegram became a matter for comment, then the Premier said suddenly there was one matter he knew of—a very grave matter—that had not been published that justified the offer. Now, what is that very grave matter? There was not a single fact or suggestion disclosed in any despatch read by the Premier to-day which has not already been published by the daily Press. Was any particular fact as to Britain’s danger conveyed to this Ministry that was kept back from the Canadian Parliament or from the Commonwealth Ministry? I venture to say that there was no evidence in possession of this Ministry when the offer of the Dreadnoughts was made, other than what had been published in the ordinary newspaper columns of this country. If you want to get some evidence on that point you may take the utterances of Mr. Asquith. Here is a cable dated the 23rd March. Mr. Asquith said he protested against “the absurd and mischievous legends regarding Britain’s unpreparedness. A more unpatriotic and unscrupulous representation of the actual situation never came to his knowledge.” That rebuke to the panic-mongers was uttered a day after our Dreadnought offer. Now, I am able to say that the Australian Commonwealth Government had no communication from the Imperial Government indicating that Britain was in grave danger of being attacked by Germany or any other Power before the New Zealand Government made that offer, and I am convinced that no intimation came to our Government from the Imperial authorities at all. In Australia all they had to go upon was the published newspaper cables. If the Imperial Government have taken the New Zealand Government into their special confidence, all I can say is that the Imperial Government have done a very remarkable thing. I mention this because I do not believe there is a parallel in English history for such an action as the Cabinet was guilty of in pledging this country, because it is all nonsense to say we are not committed to this four millions of expenditure. I do not believe we shall ever have to find the money; but we have to discuss this matter now as though the offer had become a tangible liability. My firm conviction is that the Conference will shunt the Dreadnought offer, and I believe the Premier has that conviction himself if we could only get a confession from him. But the fact remains that that offer was equal to drawing a draft on this country for four millions of money, and that draft was drawn without the authority of this country. Now, when the House assembles next week, and this matter is discussed I shall be pleased to hear a single instance in connection with parliamentary practice where a Cabinet has pledged the country to such an extent without consulting Parliament. I know well enough, in reply to some criticism from the leader of the Opposition, the Hon. the Premier claimed that in making this offer in the recess the Cabinet was the attorney of Parliament. I should like to have some proof of that. In my judgment, an attorney is one who may do in the absence of any party all that that party could do in his presence; and, as a matter of fact, no Cabinet can legislate in the absence of Parliament. It cannot modify or impose taxation, and yet this offer of four millions of money without the authority of Parliament is practically equal to a burden of taxation upon our shoulders of £160,000 a year for forty-

eight years, or until the debt is liquidated. Mr. Balfour, on the 23rd March, in the same debate from which I have quoted Mr. Asquith's statement, said, "No one would deny that the country was safe now." It does not look as though there was much ground for the Tory naval scare which Mr. Asquith had just a few minutes before described as a mischievous legend and an unscrupulous and unpatriotic representation of the actual situation. And then Sir Charles Dilke, one of the most gifted and best-informed men in the House of Commons, in the course of the same discussion said "he deprecated unworthy panic." I am not going to discuss the question of whether or not the British navy is in as high a state of efficiency as it ought to be. It is not a question for this Parliament to decide. I believe the Naval Conference is called so as to secure some unity of action as between the different countries, and to, if possible, prevent any interference in the future with the course of British politics such as the offer of a Dreadnought constituted. Now I come to this telegram to the editors. Why should a telegram have been sent to the editors at all, and no telegram sent to any member of this Parliament nor to the leader of the Opposition? That question has been asked before publicly, and no answer has been made to it. But I claim that this telegram contains one statement that is about as far from the truth as a statement could possibly be. I must confess that, in view of all that has happened since the Dreadnought offer was made, it seems to me that there was a desire that the nature of this communication to the newspaper editors should not be made public. Then, too, the tone in which it was couched led a large number of papers to indorse the Dreadnought offer that would otherwise have been very critical of the offer. Had it not been for the terms used in this telegram, I am quite sure that the constitutional aspect of the Dreadnought offer would have been treated with the consideration it deserves; but an appeal was made to the sense of power possessed by the newspaper Press of this country, and they were loyal in nearly every case to the appeal. I am in possession of the wire sent to the newspapers simultaneously with the cable making the Dreadnought offer being despatched to the Home Government, which the Premier gave me permission to read.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—You must accept the responsibility.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—I take the responsibility.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Who did you get it from?

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—I have never in my life betrayed a man who gave me his confidence, and no public servant who ever told me anything that he was sure the public ought to know ever found himself embarrassed as a consequence. There are undoubtedly times when for the protection of the public carefully arranged plans of secrecy ought to be broken through. This telegram that I am about to read is very involved, and there is only one paragraph in it that I consider of very much importance. I think it is clear that the Premier intended it to go to every newspaper in the Dominion. The following is the telegram:—

"March 22nd, 1909, Wellington.

"Editors of all papers where message about battleship is sent.

"(Strictly confidential.)

"I HAVE sent you an important telegram for publication in connection with the British navy. I would like to impress upon you that the situation is much graver than is generally supposed or has been published, and the offer that the Government has made is one which we know will greatly help Great Britain in the present crisis, chiefly by virtue of the moral effect and as illustrating to Germany that the British dominions will rally round the Mother-country in the time of imminent danger, as is apparent at present in such a situation.

"I have felt that narrow consideration of pounds shillings and pence should yield to our plain duty to Great Britain where national existence is threatened, as the matter transcends party, and therefore feel it my duty to tell you confidentially our motive and desire to avoid publication of anything alarming, and hence have made this strictly confidential.

"J. G. WARD."

Note the sentence, "The situation is much graver than is generally supposed or has been published." I believe that was the sentence that succeeded in gaining an indorsement of the Press for the Government's violent defiance of parliamentary rights. The editor would be justified in saying, "The Imperial Government have communicated with the New Zealand Government in this matter. Evidently a much graver condition of things exists than has been made public through the Press." Nearly every newspaper editor would sink all influences of party. It may not have been intended that it should have that effect. I am quite prepared to believe that the Hon. the Premier was excited when making his historical and hysterical offer. I am prepared to believe that the Premier's mental condition was not quite normal, and that this telegram was not drafted with that deliberation which it would have received under ordinary circumstances; but the statement that the Dreadnought offer was based upon grave information not then published doubtless won for the offer a reception it would not otherwise have received at the hands of the Press of this Dominion. I think the Premier has established a most dangerous precedent by this editorial consultation. He consults the Press of the country, and he treats with utter contempt the Parliament of whose Executive for the time being he is the head. What justification can be made for that conduct? I cannot conceive of any; nor do I believe that when the people themselves speak on this question, as they will do in due course—the rank and file of the electors of this country—that they are going to indorse such a departure from constitutional procedure. I want to ask one or two questions. What information to justify the Dreadnought offer was not published but was known to the Government at the time the offer was made? I am bound to believe, in the absence of any information, that there was no information in the possession of the Government of this country other than what every man in the country had access to through the newspaper Press, and that there was no information other than what the Dominion of Canada and the Commonwealth of Australia also had in their possession, and they had no such secret information. We judge that by the utterances of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Prime Minister of Australia. The speech of the

Right Hon. the Premier, on the whole, was free from feeling, but I must confess that he was very contradictory on one or two important points. For instance, he said distinctly these two things: if he had not made the offer to the Imperial Government the Naval Conference would never have been heard of. That was towards the end of his speech; I took it down verbatim. And at the beginning of his speech he said the offer of the Dreadnought was not directly or indirectly affecting the Naval Conference. I do not know whether honourable members noticed that.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I did not make the former statement. I did not say that.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—I think that if the right honourable gentleman will look at his *Hansard* proof he will find that he did. I do not propose to discuss the Dreadnought question in detail to-night, because I take it that is not the matter that is before us; but I want to refer now to that communication calling the Conference. The leader of the Opposition referred to some part of it, but I do not think he mentioned this: in this despatch of 1st May, indicating that the Conference would be called, the Right Hon. Mr. Asquith was very careful to say that it was a subsidiary Conference—not the ordinary Imperial Conference. He was very careful to say that it was a Conference to deal with technical and quasi-technical questions. He was also careful to say that Canada was being represented by the Minister of Defence, or, failing the Minister of Defence, by some other member of the Government, assisted by an expert; but he said—and this is the vital clause of this despatch—"it is entirely for the Government of New Zealand to decide the precise form of its representation." Does that indicate that the Imperial Government declared that only the Premier could represent New Zealand? Now, a paper down South a day or two ago said that if the Prime Minister does not go, no one can go, clearly stating—I can put no other meaning upon it—that the invitation had been addressed personally to the Prime Minister. If it is so, then it is in direct contradiction of the terms of the despatch calling the Conference—"The exact character of the representation is entirely a matter for the Government." The Premier said that the Hon. Mr. Hall-Jones would have refused to act if he were asked to do so, and that struck me at the time as being a very remarkable statement. I have always understood that the High Commissioner was there to attend to any matters affecting the well-being of this country that the Parliament and the Executive ask him to attend to. "The Conference will be of a purely consultative character and will be held in private, and the deliberations will be assisted by the presence of members or other expert advisers of His Majesty's Government." The Premier said, in speaking, that the business of the Naval Conference transcends anything we can be called upon to deal with in this country. I think the Premier will remember saying that, and I join issue with him there. I hold—and, of course, every member is entitled to hold an opinion on this matter—I hold that there are many questions of greater importance than a purely consultative conference—a subsidiary conference to deal with technical and semi-technical questions relating to defence. There are many matters of greater importance, and I tell the Premier now that there are thousands of men in this country who will keenly resent the postponement of the Parliament until the end of the year. We have been retrenching hundreds of men from the public service. There are, no doubt, several thousand men in this country who are out of employment, who do not know where to look for to-morrow's meals, who are weighted down with anxiety as to what they are to do to provide for their own and their family's ordinary necessities.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—How many are there in Christchurch?

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—I will undertake to say that in Christchurch there are four or five hundred men out of work. In answer to an appeal made by Mr. Wilson, secretary to one of the unions down there, last week a hundred and fifty men in writing disclosed the condition in which they were. In asking for the information, he said that it would not be used publicly, that he would not print their letters; but I believe a hundred and fifty answered in writing his appeal for information. Now, we all know that if a hundred and fifty men will disclose in detail their trouble, there are a large number of men who will suffer in silence, and will not answer an appeal of that kind. The Premier must know that from one end of the Dominion to the other three or four thousand would be a very moderate estimate to make of the unemployed in New Zealand. I want to see an efficient representation of this country at the Naval Conference. We are not discussing that at all. There is no one in this gathering going to oppose the Dominion being properly represented there; but I hold that we should secure that representation without dislocating the whole of the public business of this country for the next six months. That is the point; and I believe that a vast number of people in New Zealand will hold the opinion that the Premier's personal desire to figure on a stage as big as London is largely responsible for the strenuous effort he is making to personally attend a Conference which is not an ordinary Imperial Conference of Premiers, which will sit in due course in 1911. They may be wrong in coming to that conclusion, but all that is happening now lends colour to the suggestion that the personal equation is figuring very largely in the attitude that the Premier has taken up with regard to the exact representation of New Zealand at the Naval Conference. I say there are certainly several thousand men in New Zealand who are almost at their wits' ends to know how to provide for their requirements of to-morrow, and the Premier says that the business of the Naval Conference transcends anything we can be called upon to deal with in this country. For three years this Government has had the chance of dealing with the question of our land defences, and what has been done? What will the Right Hon. the Premier have to report to the Naval Conference if the question of land defence should come up? He will have to admit that the Volunteer Force in this country is absolutely disorganized and disheartened. He will have to admit that the condition of things is so bad that the Defence Council has recently been disbanded. There is no Defence Council now, I understand. He would have to admit, if he were frank, that matters relating to the defence of New Zealand are in a perfectly chaotic state. Now, I take it that that is a very important matter that this Parliament ought to deal with forthwith. If that is postponed for six months, you may find the temper of the country

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

of the resolution will be agreed to, and I hope the second part will be defeated. Before I sit down I should like to ask whether or not we are to have the motion put in two parts. It is most important, as unless put in two parts I intended moving a further amendment. If the motion is put in two parts I am quite content. I am disappointed and the country will be disappointed with the reasons given for the proposal to adjourn the public business of the country. It is a reflection on every member of Parliament: it is tantamount to saying that we cannot carry on our business in the absence of one man. Supposing the right honourable gentleman had been seized with an illness which promised to go on for some months, do you think the House would have been adjourned? It is absolutely not conceivable. It would be eminently useful if the Prime Minister had been, during the Naval Conference, able to get into touch with Parliament then sitting. Supposing any point crops up, and the Prime Minister is asked to commit the country, I believe it would have been a very fortunate arrangement if he could have cabled out and asked his colleagues to submit the matter immediately for the consideration of Parliament, and get their opinion as to whether he should agree to a certain course being followed. It would certainly be an advantage rather than a disadvantage. I can see many advantages in the House going on with the business, and I cannot see one disadvantage in the House going on with its business during the Prime Minister's absence. I am sure Mr. Millar or Mr. Fowlds—to take two of the older Ministers—could conduct the business of the House with dignity and success in the absence of the Premier. We have had no promise of a big programme of legislation. The Premier himself told us at Wanganui that what the country wants is a period of legislative rest. That does not fit in with the suggestion that there are measures of such an important character to be submitted that the whole bottom will fall out of the country unless they are introduced personally by the Premier. On behalf of my constituents I claim that matters affecting them ought not to be adjourned because of a Conference to be held in London. Not a single good reason has been advanced why we should declare that in the absence of one man, even though he be the head of the dominant party in politics, the business of the country should be stopped, and that Parliament would be incapable of carrying out its ordinary functions.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I propose to put the motion in two parts.

The question, "That this meeting of members of the House, recognising the vital importance to the Empire of the impending Naval Conference, considers it necessary that New Zealand should be represented at such Conference, and that in view of the important part New Zealand proposes to take in Imperial naval defence such representation should be by the Prime Minister of New Zealand," was put to the voices and declared carried.

On the question, "That this meeting further considers that, as this is the first session of a new Parliament, it is expedient that the Prime Minister should be in his place to explain the policy of his Government to the House, and that therefore Parliament should, after making the necessary financial arrangements to enable the business of the country to be carried on, be prorogued until the 30th day of September next."

Mr. ALLEN (Bruce) said the Prime Minister had agreed to put the motion in two parts, but nobody agreed to the second part being put without any debate at all.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—We have had the debate on both the first and second parts of the resolution.

Mr. ALLEN.—Oh, no; not on this second question. Now, I want to move an amendment to it. I want to move, That all the words after "That" be omitted, and that the following be inserted in lieu thereof: "this meeting, being of opinion that important business, which does not admit of delay, awaits the consideration of the Legislature, deems it advisable that the work of Parliament should proceed without interruption."

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—That is a direct negative.

Mr. ALLEN.—Well, the right honourable gentleman has taken upon himself the dictatorship of the meeting, and can say whether it is out of order or not. It is his business to do it. I leave it to him absolutely to say whether it is in order or not. If he says it is a direct negative, he must take the responsibility of doing so. I think this amendment puts the matter in a very clear way, and I wish to justify it in a very few words. I am not going to speak at any length. I do not agree with all that Mr. Taylor has said. I think the Premier, in his capacity at least as Defence Minister, should attend this Conference, and I do not agree with the suggestion made by Mr. Taylor that it is merely a Conference that will deal with technical subjects. But it is on account of the Conference proposing to deal with something more than technical matters that I deem it to be of such very considerable importance. The Conference, we are informed in the correspondence, will deal with the principles of naval and military defence, as well as technical details, and because of the larger question of principle I think it is right that a representative of the Government—say, the Minister of Defence, or, if he cannot go, then one of his colleagues—should go Home to attend it, for there should be some one there to speak with due authority for this country. Not the High Commissioner, for the High Commissioner is not so closely in touch with the people of the Dominion of New Zealand as a member of the Ministry, who has just come back fresh from the elections. On the ground, then, that this Conference is one of great importance, and that it proposes to deal with the principles on which the naval and military defence of the Empire should be based, I think the Prime Minister should attend it. If Mr. Taylor were correct in his assumption that it would only deal with technical matters, there would be no necessity for the Prime Minister to go Home at all, because everything that would arise with respect to technical details could be settled by some other representative, or even by communication. A point that was made by the Premier this afternoon was not strictly correct. He said it was necessary for him to go to the Conference to settle the details of the Dreadnought offer, inasmuch as the proposed despatch making suggestions with regard to these details had not arrived, and was apparently being held in abeyance pending the Conference,

and, further, that the Conference was a result of the New Zealand Dreadnought offer. This latter statement is not borne out by the facts. Now, the necessity for this Conference has arisen not through any action of New Zealand, or, at any rate, not mainly through any such action, but more particularly through the action of Canada. Canada has determined to take its share in the defence of the Empire; but Canada is not prepared to take its share in Imperial defence without knowing where it stands. It wants to know what Great Britain has to offer with respect of representation. Canada will not devote millions of money to this purpose without knowing what is to be the position with regard to the Mother-country's fleet, the internal defence of Canada, the protection of her own shores and trade routes, and that is why she asked for a consultation with the Mother-country with respect to this question of defence. After Canada had asked for this Conference there came the Dreadnought offer from New Zealand, and there was also some suggestion from Australia; and the British Government naturally concluded that it would be a convenient time, as one Dominion—that of Canada—had already expressed the desire for consultation, and others had expressed the desire to help in the defence of the Empire—that it was a very convenient opportunity to have a conference on the whole question of military and naval defence. And it is desirable, whatever may be the origin of the Conference, that the Defence Minister and the Prime Minister of New Zealand should go. That question we have practically settled, and we come to the one immediately before us—the question as to whether the going-away of the Prime Minister is of so vast importance that everything in the way of legislation and consideration of the financial position of the Dominion should stand over for three or four months. That is what we have to decide, and honourable members must decide this matter according to their wisdom and as they see fit. We shall be asked by the Prime Minister to pass supplies. I suppose he will bring down a loan Bill. We are asked to give him an extension of appropriations for another three months—to extend from the 30th June to the 30th September—that is to say, the ordinary appropriations. And what appropriations are they? The appropriations of last year. No new work can take place, no new road, bridge, or work of any kind can be carried out until Parliament meets again, and we can deal with that question by means of estimates and an appropriation. Everything is to stand still, while the Ministry can do what they like with the Dominion's money up to the 30th September, the only limitation being that they are not to expend more than was voted last year; and those votes are for certain specific works, and they can do no other. And why is it all done? In order that the Prime Minister might go away and feel himself free with regard to the position of his own party. Now, the leader of the Opposition has represented to the meeting what appeared to him to be a very important issue. The issue is this: there are two important things we have to consider—the question of Imperial interests and of our own interests; and the Prime Minister has brought into this another issue, which I think ought to have been left out altogether, and which he has not left out—he has brought in the issue of party, and of his own party. Now, I do believe that if he had been ruled only by Imperial instincts he would have said to himself and his colleagues, "This is a matter that is greater than party, and I am not going to ask Parliament to consider me, my colleagues, or my party. I will make this secondary to the great Empire interests, and will go to the Naval and Military Conference to do my duty as a member of the Empire, and will leave my colleagues and the party, in full confidence of their ability to do so, to carry on the work of the House, trusting to members of the party to stand by my colleagues and to keep things going until I come back; and, in addition, I will trust the other honourable gentlemen of this House led by the leader of the Opposition to play the game fairly while I am away." And I am quite sure that would have been done. What has happened? Instead of going to the leader of the Opposition and asking him, as I say he should have done—as I believe was done on a previous occasion—instead of going to him and saying, "I deem it to be my duty to go, and I intend Parliament to go on; I trust you while I am away not to take any unfair advantage, and I am quite sure you will not do so," what has happened? He ignored the leader of the Opposition—not a solitary word has been said to him—and, in fact, it is perfectly true, as Mr. Massey said, this occasion has been used by the right honourable gentleman for the glorification of himself and his party, and the leader of the Opposition and everybody else has been cast into the shade. If the right honourable gentleman had been imbued with nothing but Imperial instincts, it would have been fairer for him to go to the leader of the Opposition and have said, "I will see that the work of Parliament goes on, but the contentious matters I would ask you not to expect me to bring on until I come back; but there is a vast amount of work which can be and which ought to be done during my absence, and I will ask you to deal fairly with myself and my colleagues while I am away"; and I am sure he would have received a kind response from the leader of the Opposition and those who follow him. There are many matters that can go on during the time he is away. Let me ask honourable members who are here, what in Heaven's name is to prevent the ordinary finance of the Dominion being dealt with in the Premier's absence? Before he goes he has to make provision for the necessary ways and means by way of Loan Bill or some other such proposal. If so, what is to prevent his colleagues from bringing before us the ordinary public-works estimates and the public-works proposals for the year, and having those considered by Parliament, and with the advice of Parliament making the very necessary provisions for the year? What is the necessity for the Prime Minister to be here to consider those questions? With regard to dealing with supplies, if before going away he gets his Loan Bill, surely his colleagues and Parliament are perfectly competent to decide how the supplies are to be used for the services of the Dominion. Are we to be asked to leave the Executive a free hand to do exactly what they like with any Loan Bill or with any money we may pass during the few days we shall be in session of Parliament? It is monstrous to suggest that a Parliament of eighty men assembled are not competent to deal with this question of supply after it has once been provided. If that doctrine is to be believed for a moment, what is to happen in the case of the Hon. the Premier being absent in any connection? Is the whole work of Parliament to be stopped? I say

the time is so important with respect to our financial arrangements, and our financial conditions, and the employment of our people—the time is too important for us to allow three months to go by while we sit still and do nothing. It cannot be right that we should put ourselves in that position. Now, just one word with regard to the action of the Prime Minister, which I think is so unfair to us and the country. He has told us here to-day that if he cannot get an adjournment of the House he will not go. I say that is an unfair position to place honourable members in. It is unfair by a threat of that kind to attempt to coerce us into doing what we believe to be wrong, and that is to agree to an adjournment of the House and a stoppage of the business of the country. It would have been more fair and honourable, having asked us here to get our opinion, to allow us to decide the whole issue without any threat or intimidation of that kind, and I hope the Prime Minister will yet withdraw the intimidation he has cast at us to-day. If he does not—if he still maintains the threat he holds over our heads—I can tell him it will not have the effect he hopes it will have on those who have made up their minds that the work of Parliament ought to go on although the honourable gentleman is not here. It will not have the effect of inducing them to depart from what they believe to be the right thing to do. Many of the people of this country are in such a condition that we cannot allow three months to go by without dealing with questions of importance to them, of importance to us, and of importance to the finances of the country. This amendment is not moved with the idea of preventing the honourable gentleman from going. We have passed the resolution that he shall go. We are anxious he should go, and I think I can say on behalf of the Opposition that, if he does go, whoever he leaves in charge, and his party, will receive every consideration from those who remain here—those members of the Opposition who will be here to assist in every reasonable way the carrying-out of the work that is to be done—and that no attempt whatever will be made to reap an unfair advantage in the honourable gentleman's absence.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD (Prime Minister).—I am bound to say that I have been treated unfairly, and I say it with some regret. I made it very clear, I think, when I agreed that the motion should be divided and that the two proposals should be put separately, although the mover himself was quite entitled to have them moved as one, and upon which a vote of the members of the House would have been taken as one. At the request of some honourable members I stated I would have the two parts of the motion put separately. I think it would have been fair to me to have told me that it was intended to move an amendment upon the second portion of the motion, and an unusual course in that respect has been followed. There has been no breach of faith on my part. I am not quite certain that I can say the same for the honourable gentleman who has just sat down. I am sorry to have to say it. What I have stated is quite true, and every old parliamentarian knows that I am right in my contention. Nor am I exaggerating the position; and any man who has been Speaker or Chairman of Committees will tell you that that is so. I repeat that an intimation of the proposed amendment should have been given before the motion was broken in two. The honourable member for Bruce knows as well as I do that his amendment is a direct negative of the motion—it is absolutely so—and since he put it I have consulted with those who have experience, and they concur with me. However, I will put my complaint aside. I want to say a word in connection with the proposal to have New Zealand represented at the Imperial Conference. I told the House my intention in the matter to-day. I said that in the interests of the public and the country, that in the absence of an adjournment of the House for the time proposed, recognising what was my duty as leader of the party and as head of the Administration, I could not be present at the Conference to represent New Zealand if a motion to that effect was carried. I desire to repeat that if a motion is carried not to adjourn the House during my absence at the Conference I must remain here. Permit me also to say that that statement is not made for any party purposes, and I have not introduced party. No person who listened to the communication sent by me to my colleagues on the 20th March, and considered by them on the 22nd March, can have any doubt, because there is no mistaking the terms of the communication and what it meant. I will read that extract from the statement again, in order to remind honourable members of what was contained in the communication and what it implied:—

“The responsibility devolving upon the Government in taking this action is a great one, the refusal of Parliament to sanction it involving as it would the retirement of the Government or an appeal to the people; but I feel confident that the loyalty of the people of New Zealand, voicing itself through their representatives in Parliament, will indorse the action of the Government.”

There is no man of experience in this country will contradict me when I say that I put on record there the correct constitutional position. It was beyond all question, and we knew it. We knew exactly at the time the vital importance of the step to this country, and from information in our possession we believed that we were acting wisely. Every honourable member of this House knows that if we had waited for the convening of Parliament, and the contentious wrangling that would have been certain to have followed the proposals to offer a Dreadnought to the British Government, that a great deal of the wonderful effect that has been produced, and which was intended when the offer was made, would not only have been minimised, but would have been largely defeated. It has been recognised by all parties in the Old Land, and by practically all parties in this country—of course there are some exceptions—that the offer was timely and wisely made—made at the psychological moment, and made in the best interests of the Empire and of this country. I have in my possession now several hundreds of such expressions of opinion, coming from men representing all classes in this country and all interests. Then we have resolutions from responsible bodies of every description indorsing what has been done. And I am prepared to accept an indication of the people of the country in that way as being a fairly reliable guide of the approval of the action of the Government in the extraordinary position we found ourselves placed in; and the only ground upon which we could have failed to take that course would have been from lack of moral courage to undertake the responsibilities we believed to be right to accept

in the interests of our own country and in the interests of the Mother-country. Only on that ground—the want of moral courage—could anybody have charged us with not having done our duty. There is, of course, room for difference of opinion as to whether others could not have done better. We are merely human, and can only claim to do the best we can in an emergency, and it may be that others, after full criticism and knowing all the circumstances, may think they could have done better in our place. All I have to say is that the members of the Administration were unanimous in the course followed, and that we adopted it after deliberation and because we believed it to be right. I want to reaffirm that no amount of criticism, fastidious or otherwise, can in any way alter that fact. There was one item of personal element that was introduced by the honourable member for Bruce, and I think also by the leader of the Opposition, relative to what they thought the Government ought to have done in the way of consultation with the leader of the Opposition at this juncture. Now, I want to say, without the slightest offence, that I recognise, and that we all recognise, the responsibility of the leader of the Opposition in this country, or in any other country, and also that of the members who support him; but I also recognise that under the Constitution of the country there is a much greater responsibility devolving upon the Ministry of the day, and that neither the leader of the Opposition nor any one round about him can remove from the Ministry the responsibility of carrying on its constitutional work as the Executive of the country. Nothing can remove that, and if the leader of the Opposition had been consulted and had taken up a course of opposition to it, what position would the Government have been in?

Mr. ALLEN.—What are you referring to—the Dreadnought?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I was alluding to the offer.

Mr. ALLEN.—I did not refer to that. I thought he should have been consulted about the closing of Parliament.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Well, some one referred to it; and I want the point clear that, so far as the Government is concerned, no one could remove responsibility—neither the leader of the Opposition nor any one else—from the Administration of the country, because the fact has to be recognised that so long as the Government is in office it is the Executive of the country, and it must accept the whole responsibility of its acts. If it makes an error of judgment, as all Governments must do sometimes, then it must accept the tremendous responsibility attaching to its position in such a case as the present one. I want to say advisedly that on a question of administration the Government cannot shelter under the ægis of the leader of the Opposition or of any members of the House, or even of our own supporters. The suggestion has been made that we were not sufficiently considerate to the members of the House, our own supporters of course included, in not communicating with them by telegram. Now, I want to make clear why I did not communicate with members by telegram. We are being blamed for a course that we followed advisedly. After discussing the matter fully we were of opinion that we could not expect the individual members of Parliament, with no opportunity of conferring with other members and no opportunity of having placed before them the same information that we had in our possession, to come to a decision. We believed that if we attempted to shelter ourselves by getting members of Parliament to commit themselves to a certain course by telegraph we should be acting unfairly to them and placing them in an altogether wrong position. Whether rightly or wrongly, that was the view taken by us, and I believe it to have been the best and the right one. We came to the conclusion, in a matter unprecedented so far as this country is concerned, that we should not be justified in attempting to throw off the Executive its actual responsibilities, and, if that course was a wrong one, that we should as a Government suffer by losing our position on the Treasury benches. I also think that the members of our own party should not suffer as the result of our own action. In other words, that the members of Parliament, when they met, should be free to take whatever course they desired, or which they believed to be in the best interests of the country. Those are the reasons which influenced us, and every member of the Administration knows that to be the case. And here I want to say, with reference to the sending of a telegram to the members of the House of Representatives and receiving their *imprimatur* upon any question, I do not approve of that.

Mr. MASSEY.—Why telegram to the editors?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Pardon me, no editor of any newspaper in this country was consulted on this point. I am now referring to members. As to telegraphing to the editors, that was not going to help us in deciding this question, as the telegram referred to was sent after the offer of the Government had been despatched.

Mr. J. ALLEN.—It did help you.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I think the member for Bruce really desires to see the Imperial navy helped. And surely, if anything could help the Government in such a matter, the honourable member ought to have been delighted to have seen such assistance given—an assistance that was given by a very large section of the Press of this country; and the bulk of the editors of our Press are hard-headed business men. Of course, there is an odd exception, as there is in every body of men, but the bulk of them are hard-headed and honest, and have practical knowledge, and know themselves what is best for the welfare of the Empire and of this country.

Mr. MASSEY.—I suppose you say members are not?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—No, I do not say that. I should be very sorry to do so, or to think so, as I hold a contrary opinion. But I say that the sending of telegrams to editors was not in the nature of a consultation or a request for the ratification of the action of the Government. And the honourable gentleman must know that to be the case. The Government accepted the responsibility, as I said this afternoon, and I reaffirm it now. We did so because we were persuaded in our own mind that it was not only the right thing to do, but it was a desirable thing to do. And although I am exceedingly sorry that the member for Christchurch North should have such a poor opinion of myself as that I should be desirous of flourishing in London, I may

tell him that I never entertained such an idea. I want to say—and I say it sincerely—that I do not attach any importance to a matter of that sort; and I say it would be unfair of any one occupying the position that I do—it would be not only unfair, but it would be an improper thing, even if the House voted against the adjournment—it would be an improper thing that I should go to the Conference tied down to the terms of resolutions that it is suggested might be passed by Parliament whilst the Conference was going on. The House might pass a resolution without the slightest knowledge of what was taking place in the privacy of the Conference. While I believe it is right that its representative should not bind the country, imagine any one twelve thousand miles away sitting at a Conference and doing what he believed to be best in the interests of the country—imagine him suddenly getting a resolution that had been passed by the House of Representatives here, without a single member of the House knowing what was transpiring at the Conference its representative was attending! It would be most embarrassing to him.

Mr. MASSEY.—Surely you can trust the House.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—How can the House know what is going on at a private conference? The leader of the Opposition is surely a man of common-sense, and must recognise that the Conference is of a private nature. He will not know, nor will any one else know—how can they know?—what takes place during the proceedings of the Conference. The Press will not be there, and rightly so, for the reason that the very nature of the Conference demands that it should be a private one, and without privacy it could not be effective. But apart from any other aspect of the question, just imagine any man going Home as the responsible representative of the country at a conference where the matters discussed are bound to be respected as a matter of privacy on account of the enormous importance of them, and of his being in doubt as to what Parliament was saying about him before he could even finish his duties at the conference, and bring back proposals to receive the ratification of Parliament. I do not think any member who realises the position would expect any one who understood the whole thing to tolerate anything of the kind. I should like to say one word, for the information of honourable members, upon one or two aspects of this matter that have been put forward during the discussion this afternoon. I recognise to the fullest possible extent the inconvenience that arises as the outcome of a position such as this. I am as strongly as any member of the House against the holding of conferences in the Old Country concurrently with the sitting of Parliament in New Zealand. I am against their being held at a time when the Parliament of this country ought to sit. And I believe there is only one way in which this can be got over—but whether that time is within measurable distance of arriving remains to be seen—that is, by having some definite kind of representation of this country in the Old Country—and which, of course, must be approved by the people of this country—for the purpose of allowing the people and Parliament of this country to have their views voiced, and their position represented under some definite system. We have not got to that yet, but we have to recognise that the wheel is turning in that direction, although it may be some years before it is brought about.

An Hon. MEMBER.—What about the High Commissioner?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I am not going to discuss the High Commissioner. I have told honourable gentlemen what my views are. The British Government know we have a High Commissioner in London, and the members of the British Government are recognised by all as men filling highly responsible positions, and, consequently, they were aware that the High Commissioner was there all the time. The British Government never invited the High Commissioner to represent this country, and it would be rather peculiar if we attempted to force a representative in London on the Home Government when we have had no invitation to do so. We have no intention of doing anything of the kind, and it is no use discussing a matter over which we have no control. Now I want to remove a wrong impression which has been entertained by one member who spoke. I said that neither directly or indirectly was the Government responsible for the calling of the Conference or for fixing the time at which it should be held. Let me say a word upon what the position is at this moment in this country regarding the work to be done by Parliament, and also regarding the question of the unemployed, as it has been raised. If it had not been raised, I should have waited till Parliament met for the purpose of alluding to it. I am as anxious as any man to see that there should be legitimate employment for the people of this country, and every one of my colleagues is equally anxious to see that. To run away with the impression that we have not been doing anything in this matter is to suggest a gross injustice to the Administration. I will not give any details nor figures at this moment, because it is superfluous, and not convenient to do so. But I say this with a knowledge of the whole position: that we have done more in connection with the unemployed in New Zealand during the last twelve months, and are still doing so, than has been done at any other time in the history of the country. We are employing more men on Government works in the country at the present time—

An. Hon. MEMBER.—Private employers are employing less.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I am talking of the Government; I cannot be held responsible for private employers in the matter of employment. In the matter of employment, naturally we want to see our industries flourishing and trade brisk. I want to allude to what we are doing in this Dominion in the matter of employment, and I say in that respect we are employing more men in New Zealand legitimately in proportion to the total number of workers than any other country in the world. I know what I am asserting when I make that statement. There are about 220,000 workers altogether in New Zealand. I will undertake to say, with all due deference to the statement made by Mr. T. E. Taylor that there are several thousands of unemployed, that it is contrary to the fact. I say this, because I happen to know the number from information which has reached me from Christchurch this afternoon.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—What did I say?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—You said there were four or five hundred unemployed in Christchurch alone.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—I will undertake to prove that that is under the mark.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—From the information given to me they do not reach any thing like that. Out of the 220,000 workers in this Dominion I will undertake to say there are not two thousand who in the strict sense are unemployed. I am as anxious to help legitimately in this matter as I am sure every other honourable member of the House is; but the fact remains that the percentage of unemployed as compared with the total number of workers is less in New Zealand than in any other country in the world. I want to say that we recognise there is a certain percentage of unemployment, and we regret it, but I regret also to have the assumption conveyed that because of something we are prepared to do for the defence of the Empire to which we belong we are going to accentuate the amount of unemployment. I say it is going to do nothing of the kind. Even if a loan had to be raised to enable road and railway works to be gone on with for the purpose of affording relief to the unemployed, the House will recognise that under normal conditions the legislation for that purpose could not have been passed before the end of October, so that this suggestion that there is going to be something injurious by the delay owing to the prorogation of Parliament is a mistaken one, and I think it is my duty to point this out to honourable members. We have to make provision in the direction of a loan Bill and obtaining our ordinary supply. One word about the question of retrenchment which has been referred to by some honourable gentlemen. I regret the necessity for retrenchment, and I think every right-thinking person in the country must do so. It has been urged by many people in New Zealand. However, that is beside the question; but the Government wanted to study the necessities of those who were going out, because it was felt that where they were going out they would require naturally some assistance to enable them to have the means of a decent living. We have already considered that, and marked out a course to pursue. It was not my intention to mention it at this stage, but, as these side-issues have been introduced, it becomes my duty to make a statement of what we have in contemplation. What we have already decided is that in every case of persons going out of the service we give him the advantage of either three months' pay or of keeping him on for three months—until practically the winter is over. We decided also to acquire an area of land in both Islands to be devoted to retiring members of the Civil service, especially men with families who are not in receipt of a superannuation of over £75 a year. I feel that those who are superannuated and are getting over £75 a year are at least in a position of being enabled to look around with the view of obtaining employment or of tiding over things in the ordinary way. I believe that absolutely the only way in which you can give some relief to a number of people who through the exigencies that have arisen must be dispensed with is to give them the opportunity of getting on a suitable piece of land, and we will give financial help to a reasonable extent for providing a house for those who can go on the land. Now, we are proposing to do that in both Islands, both in the North Island and in the South Island, and I am quite confident that in the course I have suggested, with a reasonable application and a little consideration even from those who differ from us, we shall carry that policy out successfully, and that many a man, and woman too, who through matters beyond their own control as well as ours have lost the positions they formerly held—and which sometimes require to be abolished, because we cannot in the public service of this country continue more people in the Departments than there is proper and legitimate employment for—will receive the benefit. That is the course we are following, and intend to follow, and that is a course which I think will be recognised as an honest effort to try and deal with a problem which is of very great importance to many people, and who without such a policy would in some instances suffer. We are also carrying out the same policy to workers with families, and have already provided for about two hundred families along the North Island Trunk line in this way, and we will continue to do so. As the question of general defence has arisen in this matter, let me say a word or two on that. I did not contemplate the necessity of having to say anything about it at present. I was under the impression that I made it quite clear, when I spoke in Invercargill some time ago, that the Government in the coming session intended to legislate on the question of internal defence. I do not think the time opportune, nor would it be expedient for me at present to attempt to go into the details of what we propose to do. There are some people in New Zealand whose efforts I have admired, who are endeavouring to educate the people, and to try and bring about an improved feeling with a view to having a better system of internal defence, and I am strongly in favour of the people being educated in that way. But I want to say that the Government proposals that will be submitted to Parliament next session will, I believe, meet the expectations of the country, and I also believe that they will meet with the support of every reasonable member of Parliament. We have to go into the matter of the defence of New Zealand, and I want to say advisedly in this connection that we cannot have in this country an annual expenditure of one million a year for internal defence. Our population is too small, and we have in considering the position to recognise that our exigencies with regard to internal defence must be subordinated to a reasonable expenditure, though that expenditure may be increased, and that will be proposed by the Government on lines that will be a considerable improvement on what we are doing now. When you have those proposals placed before you, all I ask is that you should judge each one fairly and impartially, and help us to improve them where it is thought they might be improved. That is the only fair thing to do and what I now want to say with regard to this particular matter. Another subject alluded to by an honourable member was the question of the financial position of New Zealand itself. I want to say that the Government recognise that something ought to be done to further assist private people who want money in New Zealand. We realise that, as the outcome of the very heavy drop in wool, the dislocation of the flax-market, and subsequently to that the drop in the frozen-meat market, the margins of the securities of some people in New Zealand are not so large as they were a year or two ago.

Mr. MASSEY.—There is plenty of security.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I said the margins of some of the securities were not as good as they were a year or two ago for the purpose of obtaining advances on. Now, I want to say that as the outcome of that shrinkage which has taken place, due largely to the causes that I have stated—namely, the drop in wool, flax, and frozen meat, and, in addition, to overspeculation in land, in too many instances at overvalues—we have recognised that in conformity with that change there must be a change for the better in the manner of obtaining moneys for the use of people who want it privately. There is no legislation on the statute-book, nor would there be until the 1st January, that will give them that opportunity that is desirable.

Mr. MASSEY.—You can do it right away.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Pardon me; we cannot do it right away.

Mr. MASSEY.—Why not?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—It is easy to ask why not, but an Act of Parliament is not all that is needed if you are going to lend the people, say, an additional five millions of money—I put it hypothetically—for the purpose of utilising it to help settlers in New Zealand, and I am anxious to do it. When you have finished with Parliament you require to know where you are to get the money, and how cheaply. You require to consider those things in connection with the responsibilities devolving upon the country for every purpose.

An Hon. MEMBER.—Why do you make it the 1st January?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Nearly all our Acts come into operation on the 1st January. In a matter of this kind you have of necessity to take some time, and you have to be judicious as to how you go about it. I feel sure that upon this visit to the Old Country, though a short one, I ought to be able to materially help in that direction. I have had sufficient experience of business, and especially of financial matters, and sufficient experience of heavy responsible Ministerial life, to know what can be done in that respect, and I shall be only too glad when in London to do anything in my power in that direction. I have done so before and will do so again. I merely mention that to impress upon members the fact that we are just as sensible of the necessity for it as those who have spoken, and just as anxious to bring about an improved position in that respect. I have publicly stated in Invercargill that the Government would assist, and we will do so, and in a practical way. I merely refer to those points in order to try and give a short answer to several questions that have been raised.

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—You propose to deal with the general finances of the country?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Yes, so far as it is necessary. As far as the general finances are concerned, I think, upon the whole, we have done wonderfully well. I have seen some criticisms to the contrary made—I think they have been done for party purposes—but I think during the last two or three years we have done wonderfully well. Unfortunately, it is not recognised by some people, but one cannot help that. Any unprejudiced person will see that we have done a great work for the country in providing for the many requirements of New Zealand during the last few years. The idea I had in my mind was that if you see a way by which it is possible to have a stream of money introduced to New Zealand for lending purposes, especially for flat mortgages, particularly where the mortgagors are anxious to obtain at a rate they can afford to pay, it is a good thing to forward any such scheme. I want to say that this subsidiary Conference which has been referred to in the despatches is subsidiary only in name, as will be seen by members on looking at the proceedings of the Imperial Conference. It is not of less importance or influence than the ordinary meeting of the Imperial Conference, in the sense that it can carry on whatever business is called—

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—It is certainly more restricted, because it says so in direct terms.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I am talking about the powers of the subsidiary Conference. Power was given by the original Conference to convene subsidiary Conferences to consider any matters which might crop up before the time for calling the main Conference. By this means machinery is created which will allow the very thing we are in trouble about to be dealt with. This early meeting of members of Parliament, and the necessity for discussing whether there should be an adjournment in order to have the country represented—the very causes which are bringing use here—ought to be provided for in a broad-based Empire scheme, sufficiently flexible to meet the divergent conditions of the different portions of the Empire. I have made these few remarks by way of explanation, and with the hope of having a decision on this adjournment question come to. I merely want to say that I thought I had made it perfectly clear as to the course being followed, and have done so after full consultation with my colleagues. There is no such thing as any reflection on any one of them; but from the point of view of duty, if Parliament does not adjourn, it is but right and just that I should be here. I have said that, recognising what I consider to be my clear duty, I cannot go away if the House is sitting. If the House supports the amendment of the honourable member for Bruce it is simply declaring that the Government is not to be represented. Then, by all means—

Mr. ALLEN.—That is misrepresenting.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I will read it:—

“That this meeting, being of opinion that important business which does not admit of delay awaits the consideration of the Legislature, deems it advisable that the work of Parliament should proceed without interruption.”

I am pointing out to honourable members that I have made the position clear beforehand in the event of that being carried. The reasons are so strong and so well defined that nothing can make one change upon the statement I have already made. The fact remains that, having agreed to the resolution that the Prime Minister of the country should go to represent New Zealand, if you in the other resolution practically contradict what you have done, and say he is not to go,

then the responsibility is not mine. The responsibility will rest with the House, and I shall be entirely relieved from any personal responsibility. I have to thank the honourable members who support the Government for their consideration in abstaining from speaking to-day. They knew that by doing so it would so delay matters as to render the decision of this meeting being so protracted as to make it useless. Time is essentially of great importance, and they have recognised it, and for this recognition I am obliged.

Mr. FISHER (Wellington Central).—Sir Joseph Ward and gentlemen,—I do not propose to allow this opportunity to pass without placing on record the views I hold in regard to the actions of the Government during the past three months and the resolution that is at present before the conference. I want to say that, whilst it was suggested by the Prime Minister that he had been unfairly treated owing to the fact that honourable members proposed to speak on the second part of the resolution, we have been more unfairly treated, because we have been asked to deal with a resolution that involves the consideration of important despatches which I hold the Prime Minister should have had printed and placed in the possession of every honourable member of this conference before we sat. I believe that if we had been able to consider the despatches which took the right honourable gentleman some three-quarters of an hour to read this afternoon, the probability is that we should have been able to give a more intelligent discussion to the motion that has been moved. However, I want to ask, in the first place, what the result is going to be so far as the Dominion of New Zealand is concerned if this conference asks the Prime Minister to represent the Dominion at Home and adjourns the session as a consequence. In 1907, at the Colonial Conference which the Prime Minister attended as the representative of this country, there was laid before the Prime Minister a paper by Mr. Haldane, the Secretary of State for War. This paper was prepared by the military and naval experts of the British Government, and in that paper it was laid down that as between Great Britain and the oversea dominions there was only one line of Imperial defence that could be adopted with benefit to the whole British Empire. And how was that set out? Mr. Haldane read the results of the deliberations of the military experts, and they are summed up as follows—I want the members of this conference to note the order in which the decisions are arrived at: First, organizing the troops for home defence—that is, the Territorial army; secondly, a striking force—an “expeditionary force” is the proper phrase; and, thirdly, a navy capable of maintaining command of the sea. I want to draw attention to these propositions for this reason: that, although our Prime Minister was representing us at that Conference in 1907, and although he came back with the knowledge fresh in his memory of the requisite action that was demanded by the Imperial authorities in the interests of Imperial defence, I say he has neglected his duty to this Dominion, inasmuch as he has never attempted to place before this Parliament any defence policy which would be regarded as a part of that Imperial scheme to which I have referred. If honourable members think that the mere passing of a resolution embodying the proposal to expend two millions or four millions of money in battleships is going to discharge the obligations of this country to the Empire, then all I can say is that their conception of Imperialism is of a very low order. For the past twelve or fifteen years we have been expending money at the rate of about £200,000 a year on defence, and when the right honourable gentleman was at Home he told the Colonial Conference that the wool-kings and the kings of commerce in New Zealand were encouraging Volunteering, that the Volunteers were at the height of efficiency, and that the men were volunteering so rapidly that the Government were unable to cope with their offers. That is what he told the Conference in 1907.

An Hon. MEMBER.—Who told them that?

Mr. FISHER.—The Right Hon. the Premier, Sir J. G. Ward.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—You had better, however, read correctly my speech, which you have been so carefully going over in preparing your remarks for the last six weeks.

Mr. FISHER.—No, I have not been carefully preparing for the past six weeks. Here are the words of the Prime Minister from the report of the Colonial Conference:—

“All over our country we have the very best class of men offering to join our Volunteer corps. They are encouraged by men in every responsible position you can name in the country. Our captains of industry, our kings of commerce, the members of the Administration of the day, and the officials connected with our important State Departments, and the rank and file of those Departments realise that it is upon the popular basis of a Volunteer system that we have to provide for the internal defence of our country, and in the event of trouble arising they are our source of internal defence, and we encourage it in every possible way.”

Will the Prime Minister say now that a single one of these statements is correct?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—It was at that time, so far as I know.

Mr. FISHER.—If the subsidiary Conference to which he has been invited, and for which it is suggested Parliament should adjourn, is going to result in statements of that nature being made, it is better by far that the Premier should remain in this Dominion, that the House should sit, and that we should render efficient service to the Empire by placing ourselves in the position that has been suggested by the Imperial authorities over and over again—a position suggested by Sir Edward Grey, and suggested more lately by Lord Charles Beresford—that we should place ourselves in a position of independent defence. As far back as 1897 a proposition was made to this Dominion and to the other colonies beyond the seas that we should remedy our defects and insure an independent position in regard to defence. It was also urged that the best service that we could render to the Empire was to have a force of well-trained men in our own country who would be available for Imperial service abroad. That suggestion has never been adopted. And I say now that the mere passing of a resolution or a vote of two or four millions as a contribution towards a battleship is not a contribution that is worthy of this Dominion. It is nothing more or less than a spasm. I differ from the Right Hon. the Premier on this defence question. I differed from him

from the first on the ground that his offer to the British Government had no constitutional precedent in the history of the British Empire. It was stated in the circular telegram sent round by the Prime Minister that there was a precedent for such action. I have never heard such a precedent quoted. We have been proud to possess that inviolable right that the people shall not be taxed without the authority and sanction of the representatives of the people in Parliament; and when we have that right violated, there must be behind that violation some unassailable reason for the action of those who have brought it about. Now, what was the reason that prompted the offer of two millions to the Imperial Government? We are told that there was a crisis. It has been suggested that there was information in the possession of the Government that justified them in making that offer. I do not wish to attach too much importance to the statement in the telegram to the newspaper editors, because such a statement might have been made unconsciously. I do not accept that too literally. But what I want to point out is this: it is a remarkable thing to imagine that there was information in the possession of Ministers of the Crown in New Zealand that was not in the possession of the members of the House of Commons. There is not one member in this Assembly—I do not care on which side of the House he is—who is a “Little-Englander.” There is not one man in this House who would not indorse the proposition made from the Commonwealth that we are bound to England to the last man and to the last sovereign. That, I hold, will not be controverted by any honourable member. And when we differ on this question it cannot be said that we differ from any small or parochial point of view. There is no bigotry, there is no narrow-mindedness about our views. But what I say is that such a breach of the British Constitution could only have been justified by extremely definite and alarming information in the possession of Ministers of the Crown such as was not known to the people of the Dominion, nor, in the interests of the Empire, could be published under any circumstances. On the 22nd March this Dreadnought offer was cabled Home. It was on about the 22nd March that a vote of censure on the British Government was moved in connection with the naval programme, and one would imagine, whatever information was in possession of Ministers here, that at least some of it must have been known to members of the House of Commons. The following motion was moved in the House of Commons:—

“That, in the opinion of this House, the declared policy of His Majesty’s Government respecting the immediate provision of battleships of the newest type does not sufficiently secure the safety of the Empire.”

And seven days after the Prime Minister sent the wire from New Zealand offering two Dreadnoughts the vote of censure was rejected by a majority of 218 votes. I say in the face of that it is impossible for us to imagine that there ever existed in the minds of the British people a serious belief that the Empire was in danger, as we were led to believe by Ministers of the Crown in this part of the world.

An Hon. MEMBER.—You are wrong there: have you read the debates?

Mr. FISHER.—I have read the debates. On the 22nd May, Lord Charles Beresford said there was no need for panic.

The Hon. Mr. R. McKENZIE (Minister of Public Works).—If the public knew what was the position there would be a panic.

Mr. FISHER.—I will read exactly what he did say:—

“The self-governing dominions can best render help to the Mother-land not by spending two millions on a battleship to serve in British waters, but by making efforts to defend themselves from the only measures by which the dominions can be hurt—that is, from the cutting of trade-routes by an enemy’s fleet. . . . The investment of two millions in home (local) defence and in cruisers which would protect trade-routes would be a better investment than the expenditure of a similar sum in helping to defend Britain’s shores. But there is no need for panic.”

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—How were they to do that?

Mr. FISHER.—The oversea dominions were being protected and have been up to the present by the Imperial navy. Our contribution towards that has been £40,000 a year until lately, when it was raised to £100,000.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Lord Beresford knew all about that when he made the statement.

Mr. FISHER.—What was his concluding statement?—“But there is no need for panic.” Let me point out what Sir Edward Grey said. On the 29th March, seven days after our offer, he said,—

“Judge, if you like, when you have the full facts before you; but in the meantime I ask the House to stand with us in resisting what seems to me exaggerated alarm and mistaken apprehension, and in resisting the attempt to force upon us prematurely the extreme view which has been urged.—(Loud Ministerial cheers.)”

The Premier speaks about protecting the trade-routes of Australia. I think we ought to make a fair contribution towards the maintenance and supremacy of the navy. There is not a single man in the House who is not prepared to see the Dominion do justice in this respect; but, that being the case, we have a right to ask that the other outlying colonies of the Empire shall pay their share as well. Now, what are the naval contributions per head at the present time?—

	Per Head.	
	s.	d.
United Kingdom	15	5½
Canada	Nil.	
Newfoundland	0	3½
Commonwealth of Australia	1	3½
New Zealand	2	2½
Cape of Good Hope	0	5
Natal	0	7½
Transvaal	Nil.	

The average per head is about 7d. New Zealand's contribution per head last year was 10½d.; we have since raised it to 2s. 2d., and before you make any further contributions to the Empire or towards the navy it would have been better—it would have been statesmanlike—for our Premier to have come down to the House and have said, "Gentlemen, the British Government is considering this question of the supremacy of the navy. We raised our contribution last year from £40,000 to £100,000. I suggest we should raise it still further." Not only that, but he should have given this House the opportunity that my friend Mr. Allen and myself have been asking for—I for four years and he for fourteen years. We have been asking the Government to give us a policy and a lead in connection with this matter of defence, and we could never get it. Now, because the question is raised at Home it has become a question of policy, and it is the only means by which New Zealand could be forced into a realisation of its shameful defencelessness. When you come to think that in this Dominion year after year we have had hundreds of thousands of pounds voted, and that during the past twenty years something like four millions of money has been bungled and squandered in the most shameless manner on our so-called defences, is not the term justified? I have said in this House before, and I shall say it again during the coming session, that we have had criminal neglect in regard to the administration of our defence matters. It would have been a more *bona fide* and a more genuine offer to the Empire, and it would have been a more Imperialistic attitude on the part of the people of this country, if our Parliament could have said, "You go on building your Dreadnoughts. We will attend to our own defences and make ourselves as impregnable as possible, so that in the event of hostilities it would be too hazardous an undertaking for any foreign nation to come here and try to get a footing." There would have been something sensible in that. The Colonial Conference of 1897 had a report from the defence experts of the Imperial Government, in which they say specifically that the dominions oversea must first of all provide for their own defence. As to the matter of the adjournment of the House, the Premier has suggested that if we do not agree to the abandonment of the session he will not be able to go Home. At any rate, he will refuse to go Home. He controverts the statement made by the honourable member for Christchurch North that there were four or five hundred unemployed in Christchurch, and I believe he said, in replying later on, there were not more than two thousand unemployed in the Dominion. I am afraid the honourable gentleman's estimate of the number of unemployed in this city alone is very far from correct. He has not the slightest conception of the state of affairs underneath the surface. It is not likely he knows the position as well as the ordinary members of the House, but he is going to find it out from them if the opportunity offers.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I know more about it than you do.

Mr. FISHER.—Then, if you do know more about it, you will know the correctness of the statement made by the honourable member for Christchurch North. If you know more about it, I think you should know that such a statement "that there are only two thousand unemployed in New Zealand" is absolutely incorrect and wrong. You will find that the members of the House will bear that out. What I say is this: there is important business for this House to carry out during the coming year—extremely important business—and whilst I do not for one moment see any reason why the Prime Minister should not represent New Zealand at the Conference, I do not for one moment imagine, on the other hand, that any member of the Opposition, or any one opposed to the Government, is going to take any advantage of the Prime Minister's absence to embarrass any of his colleagues on that account. If they attempted to do so they would damage their own reputations and interests in the eyes of the people, and quite rightly so too. That is not the intention; but what we do ask is that we shall be allowed to proceed with the business of the country and to deal with the questions that ought to be dealt with. If the Prime Minister knows more than the private members, does he not know that the reports of the Registrar-General prove conclusively that people are leaving this Dominion at the present time at a much greater rate than they have done for very many years past? Did he not state before the Imperial Conference in 1907 that the requirement of New Zealand above all things was population? He said New Zealand was a country that could carry twenty million people. What chance have we to carry twenty million people at the rate they are going out of the Dominion at the present time? It is the business of Parliament to meet and provide works and carry out a legislative programme that is going to stop this exodus. If we are going to closely settle this Dominion we must have the land question finally settled; we want the Native-land question finally settled. There can be no shadow of doubt that until these questions are settled and the money-market improves we are going to continue to have this exodus from the Dominion; and for that reason alone, if for no other, I think the House will be justified in asking that the session shall continue. Now, the present attitude of the Prime Minister is rather curious, because he recognised the fact, or at least he recognised it some time ago, and not only pointed out to the Imperial Conference in 1907 that New Zealand had a carrying-capacity of twenty million people, but he said this:—

"We have under one million of a population at the moment. We have all the ramifications of the development of great public works so essential as a provision for the future to enable people to settle in the interior of our country. We have still before us the making of the railways throughout our country. . . . Whilst anxious to help the Old World and the other portions of the Empire in making a system of common defence on both land and sea, the all-importance of which we recognise to the fullest possible extent, we still have to keep before us, as a young country, the fact that in the future many millions of money will be required for the country itself to carry out great undertakings that in the Old World have been carried out, many of them—such, for instance, as your railways—by private enterprise."

And so on. And then, after pointing out what great works lay before the State in developing this Dominion, he went on to say—

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—Why do you not say that I was using that argument as against the proposals to build a local navy? You ought to be perfectly fair.

Mr. FISHER.—You were discussing at that time the proposal by Lord Tweedmouth.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I was discussing the proposal which was urged on behalf of this country that we should establish a local navy, which we could not do.

Mr. FISHER.—You were discussing at that time—I do not want to misrepresent the honourable gentleman, and if I have done so it has been quite unintentionally—the proposals of Lord Tweedmouth, and in them was one concerning the construction of an Australian navy, and it was on that matter the Premier was speaking.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I was opposing the construction of a New Zealand navy, and pointing out why——

Mr. FISHER.—There was no proposal in connection with a New Zealand navy.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—It was on that question of our breaking the agreement with which Australia and New Zealand were concerned, and of allowing them to declare for an Australian navy.

Mr. FISHER.—Whether Australia or New Zealand was concerned I do not think affects very much the position so far as this quotation is concerned. This is what the Prime Minister said:—

“It is because of the fact that we have these great undertakings that may take years to fulfil in the future that we should hesitate to impose upon ourselves the burden of the construction of ships of war, or of any great liabilities connected with the maintenance of ships of war, or any great financial responsibilities other than we actually commit ourselves to in a defined agreement.”

Are we in a better position to-day to embark upon the construction of ships of war than we were in 1907? I admit the condition, so far as affairs at Home are concerned, are slightly different. The naval question has become the paramount question at Home, and to that extent the position is changed; but so far as we are concerned in this country we are not as able at the present time to make that contribution as we were in 1907, and at that time the Prime Minister was against it. For my own part I do not think this is a small matter, because this conference has to remember that in the years to come—and I believe, myself, the time is not very far distant—members will have to face their constituents and deal with this question. I believe that now is the proper time for members of this conference to place their views upon record. I make no apology so far as I am concerned. I represent an important and a large district, and I have held the same view all along. I am quite prepared to do anything so far as a reasonable contribution to Imperialism is concerned, but I do object to being led into a compromising promise made by the Prime Minister without consulting Parliament at all, and which may impose a burden of debt upon the people of this country for the next ten or fifteen years. That is what I object to. And, although the Prime Minister may urge as a reason that he is imbued with a spirit of Imperialism that is a credit to himself and to the country he represents, we must not forget that he is establishing a precedent for some successor who may come after him to commit this country to expenditure of some other sort—one who is not so cautious as the honourable gentleman, who is not imbued with the same spirit of Imperialism, and who is probably tinged with other motives altogether. And I say, before we make a breach of constitutional precedent in this respect the Premier would have been wise if he had consulted members of the House as they are being consulted now. I was disappointed with the speech of the Prime Minister, because I remember when the offer was made I was asked, with other members of the House, to express an opinion for publication upon the action of the Government, and I said then that I would not express an opinion, because I would leave it to the Prime Minister when he met members of the House to justify, by the information in his possession, his action at the time; and I must confess I have looked forward to to-day with a considerable amount of interest. I must confess that the Prime Minister has given no good reason for his action. Unquestionably his action in presenting the Dreadnoughts was based solely upon the cables that appeared in the newspapers, and that in itself is enough to condemn it. In regard to the Conference itself, I believe every one recognises the importance of it. Although it is a subsidiary Conference, nevertheless it is an important one, and I would suggest to the Prime Minister, as it is stated in the despatch that this Conference is going to be one of a technical or quasi-technical nature, he should take advantage of the assistance of some military expert if he is going to represent New Zealand adequately. But the honourable gentleman knows full well that at the last Conference he had to admit that in reading the reports of the experts at the War Office he read them as a layman, that he did not profess to be able to understand them clearly; and, although he did not say so, he intimated that it was a very difficult matter for him to arrive at a conclusion. It was candid of him to do so. This is a subject that requires the knowledge of experts of years of training. I would suggest to the right honourable gentleman that if he does go—whether the House adjourns or whether it does not—that he should take advantage of a military expert. Now, as regards the question of the High Commissioner, I am only going to say this: that it seems to me that the High Commissioner could represent us at a conference of a technical nature almost as well as any layman that we could send Home. He is there for that purpose. He has only been Home since last January. He is acquainted with the public sentiments of this country and with the aspirations of the people, and in my opinion he could represent this Dominion as well as anybody else. He is sent Home to represent us when we want him, whether he likes it or not. I repeat that I feel confident that if he were selected he would carry out his duties as well as any layman that we could send. I hope, so far as the Conference is concerned—I do not know what it is going to do—but I hope that it will be guided by the precedents that have been established in the past. Illustrations were mentioned this afternoon of Prime Ministers who left the country when important matters were under consideration and yet the House did not adjourn. To those illustrations there is one exception, that being in the case of the Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. But that was unique, and an incident that had no

parallel in British history before, and I think that perhaps on that occasion the course adopted was justified. But it does not exist at the present time, and I am strongly against the House adjourning. I should be delighted, however, to see the Right Hon. the Prime Minister representing the Dominion in England.

Mr. HERDMAN (Wellington North).—Sir Joseph Ward, —Sir, I gather from the significant silence of the members on that side of the House that they propose to vote against the amendment submitted to the House by the honourable member for Bruce.

An Hon. MEMBER.—We are waiting for arguments.

Mr. HERDMAN.—If they have not been supplied with arguments, or, rather, if they have failed to understand the arguments that have been supplied, it is their fault, and I am sorry for them. It seems to me to be clear that they, without entering any protest, and without giving any expression of opinion, propose to obey you, and permit you to go Home to London, and to consent to the suspension of the business of the country. As that course obviously is to be taken by this Assembly, I desire to enter my protest before the House comes to a division. The question as to whether or not it was advisable to present the British Government with a Dreadnought, to my mind, is irrelevant to the present discussion. There are only two questions for us to consider—one as to whether you should go Home to represent this Dominion at the proposed Naval Conference, and the other—which is immediately under consideration—whether it is right and proper and in the general interests of the country that during your absence this House should adjourn. With regard to the first question, I agree that you, Sir, are the most fit and proper person to represent this Dominion at that Conference. I hold that opinion, and I hold it strongly, for these reasons: To my mind, the Conference which is about to take place will be one of unquestionable importance. You have pointed out that it has been called a subsidiary Conference. Mr. Taylor, from Christchurch, has pointed out that it has been named a subsidiary Conference. But the very fact that the Conference is being called prior to the date upon which the ordinary Conference of Premiers would have been called indicates beyond all doubt that this proposed gathering of colonial representatives is to be one of great importance. I need not labour the question. We are all familiar with the events that have taken place during the last few months, and it seems to me to be clear that every dependency of Great Britain should, if it is possible to do it, send some representative to this meeting, in order that the whole question of national defence should be thoroughly considered and investigated. We, Sir, desire information on the subject of national defence. You, no doubt, desire information on that most important question. The other gentlemen who will attend that Conference will desire information from you as to the proposals which you intend to make here regarding our own local defence. The matter that has been brought under the notice of members by Mr. Fisher indicates that it is highly desirable that you, in the capacity of Defence Minister, should attend there not only in order that you should get exact and reliable information as to what is to take place in future regarding Imperial defence, but in order that, if possible, you may return here with some sound defence policy. We know what has taken place regarding defence matters during the last fourteen or fifteen years in the history of this country. Colonel Fox came to it, and condemned our defences. He was succeeded by Colonel Pole-Penton, who likewise condemned our defences. He in turn was succeeded by General Babinington, who in scathing terms reflected upon the administration of the defence of the country. It was recognised then, after these three gentlemen had come, had seen, and had gone away, that the Commandant system was impossible, and you, I believe, were responsible for introducing a novelty in the shape of a Council of Defence. That Council of Defence has likewise proved a failure. In my opinion, the real cause of the failure of defence in this country lies in the fact that our Volunteer system has never had a chance, and that political interference has spoilt it during the last fifteen years. Well, Sir, we trust that as a result of your visit to England you will come back fully satisfied that there must be no political interference in matters of defence in future. If a system of compulsory training is adopted in lieu of the existing system, I am not quite so sure yet that political interference will not spoil that also; but I hope, at any rate, that you will come back from England convinced beyond all doubt at least on one point, that there shall be no political interference in matters of defence. If there is, our defence will be hopelessly weak to the end of time. So much for your proposed visit to the Old Country. Now I turn to a more important question—the question immediately under the consideration of this Assembly—the question whether you should have your way and that Parliament should adjourn. I, for one, hold a strong view on this point. I venture to say that if Parliament adjourns, and does not go on with the business of the country, we shall be doing something that is wrong and unconstitutional. The only precedent that can be produced in support of the step which you propose to take is the occasion in 1897 when the late Mr. Seddon visited England—an occasion of extraordinary importance—nothing like this. Am I to understand from the right honourable gentleman that his position in the House is so weak that he cannot afford to go Home and intrust the government of the country to the gentlemen whom I see sitting round about him to-night? Is it the case that the right honourable gentleman is so much afraid of rebellion amongst his own followers that he dare not leave this country for two months for fear of being ousted from office? I believe I may assure the honourable gentleman that he need have no fear from members of the Opposition, for I venture to think that it is one of the principal desires of the members of the Opposition that the right honourable gentleman and his Government and his followers shall continue to sit on the benches which they occupy at the present time until three years are over, and until the Augean stable which has become so unclean under their management has been restored to a thoroughly clean condition.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—And then we will annihilate the Opposition.

Mr. HERDMAN.—No; then I think the time will be appropriate for the right honourable gentleman's removal. I believe that time is soon coming, and that is one reason why the right

honourable gentleman should allow Parliament to go on. There are other reasons why the business of the country should be gone on with at the present juncture. One is this: that we have come to a period in the history and condition of the affairs of the country such as we have not experienced for the last seventeen or eighteen years, when the political tide has commenced to turn, and things are not as prosperous as they were a few years back. I need not refer to the question that has been referred to by Mr. T. E. Taylor and Mr. Fisher—to the condition of poverty that prevails; but there are other questions that require to be dealt with just now, right away. There is the condition of the public service of the Dominion. The right honourable gentleman has admitted in a speech he made at the Upper Hutt that the Government are spending a quarter of a million more per annum on the public service than they have any right to spend. He proposed to make reductions in the Civil Service which will have the effect of saving the country a quarter of a million sterling per annum. Well, there is only one construction to be put upon that proposal, and it is that £250,000 per annum has been spent by the Government in power which should not have been spent, and that the members of the Ministry admit this. That is the admission. What other construction can be put upon it? However, I will not deal with this question at length now. I simply mention it to show the significance of the question of the position of the public service of New Zealand. Is it not time that the right honourable gentleman introduced legislation which would have the effect of placing the public service of the Dominion under an independent non-political Board? Is not that a question that should be immediately dealt with? Is it not a question that the country is anxious to see seriously considered immediately, and which we should insist upon attacking?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—And you suggest that that should be done in my absence?

Mr. HERDMAN.—I suggest that it should be considered in your absence. And with all due respect I suggest that you have colleagues sitting beside you who are fully able to deal with this important question even in your absence. Then, there is another matter. We hear from the Minister of Railways that the 3-per-cent. policy has failed. I understood from a speech made some time ago by the Prime Minister that the 3-per-cent. policy had been in vogue for a considerable time, and had been a pronounced success. We have one Minister saying one thing one day, and another Minister saying something else the next day. Is not the administration of the railways of the Dominion a question that should be dealt with immediately? We find, if we go to Australia, that in New South Wales, after allowing interest on capital cost, after providing for the working-expenses and replacement, they have a profit of £600,000 per annum, while our system of management of railways leaves us with an annual loss of over £150,000—really more than that; I am putting it at the lowest possible figure. This is another question we ought to deal with, and I merely mention it to show that there is no justification at all for closing down Parliament during your absence. There is only one other thing I will refer to. Take the tightness of the money-market alluded to. That stringency is said to be due to a very large extent to the depreciation in the price of wool. Well, wool has fallen. Among other causes you refer also to the flax industry. Wool has recovered, and a fair price can now be got; the same does not apply to flax. I assert that the real cause of the depression has not yet been alluded to by any member of the House. The real and most potent cause of depression is the system of administration and legislation which has been carried on in the Dominion—a system which has created in the minds of people who have money to invest in the community a feeling of dread and fear. The principal causes of the depression at the present time are not the drop in the price of wool, not the alteration in the condition of the flax industry, not the trouble in connection with the timber, but it is the persistent interference with the rights of individuals and the condition of terrorism which exists in the minds of people who have a little cash invested here. I say that people are afraid to bring their money here. Old institutions that existed here at one time, and who had money invested on mortgage, have withdrawn their investments.

The Hon. Mr. T. MACKENZIE.—Because they can get better interest elsewhere.

Mr. HERDMAN.—Not at all.

The Hon. Mr. T. MACKENZIE.—Yes; in the Argentine they can get 8 per cent.

Mr. HERDMAN.—I am not alluding to the Argentine at all. I am alluding to those who have trust-money to invest, and who have taken it away. We know how individuals are treated who have capital invested in industries in this country. I suggest that one of the principal causes of the driving of capital out of the country, and what has led very much to the condition of depression, is the policy which you gentlemen on the Government benches have adopted in the past, and I think that the one thing that will save this country and that will establish confidence is for the Government to resign their position.

Mr. MALCOLM (Clutha).—Sir Joseph Ward perhaps will excuse me if I refer to an answer he gave while the member for Wellington Central was speaking. He interjected that the member for Wellington Central had been preparing his speech with a certain gentleman for the last six weeks. I trust that does not mean that the actions of members are watched and retailed to the Premier; but there has been a suggestion that such was formerly the case. I say emphatically that if such a feeling exists amongst members, the sooner that feeling is allowed to disappear the better.

An Hon. MEMBER.—What about the Nuggets?

Mr. MALCOLM.—I will give the honourable member, if he wishes it, some information Amy Bock gave me regarding himself; but perhaps the honourable member would not wish that. I consider that honourable members are justified in speaking at some length on the questions raised in this debate, because the proposal of the Government that Parliament should adjourn seems to me detrimental to the interests of the country, and derogatory to this House. I say derogatory to this House, because it would give some foundation for the statement that is made, sometimes in jest and sometimes in all seriousness, that it would not affect the welfare of the country if Par-

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

House's opinion, his judgment might be confirmed and his position strengthened. The whole debate has boiled itself down to this: The Premier has declared—and I was glad to hear it—that we were prepared to make any sacrifice for the Empire. Loyalty with me, as with other members, is one of the great passions of my life; but our loyalty is not founded only on material interests, as the Premier hinted, but is founded on the knowledge that we are one people with one history, and in the common pride we take in being an unconquered people. But, says the Premier, we shall make any sacrifice in men that the Empire demands, we shall make any sacrifice in money that the Empire demands; but there is one thing we shall not sacrifice, and that is the interests of party. That was a poor view to take of Imperial interests. What did the Premier tell us? That during his absence at the Conference a vote of no-confidence might be proposed.

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

Mr. MALCOLM.—I must, of course, accept the honourable gentleman's word as to what he said. It might have been said jocularly, but the statement was made. Well, I say "perish party" so long as the Empire stands.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I said that during the short session in the summer there would be ample time for want-of-confidence motions.

Mr. MALCOLM.—I took the other meaning of the sense of the words; but I accept his idea of the meaning now. However, the whole of his arguments have been confined to the injury that would result to party in this Parliament, and it is not sufficient ground upon which to base an appeal to Parliament. The interests of this country will be unnecessarily sacrificed by Parliament acquiescing in this proposal, and personally I am strenuously opposed to the adjournment or the prorogation of the House, and I shall very much regret if the House sees its way to carry it.

Mr. LANG (Manukau).—I do not intend to detain the meeting very long. The Premier, in speaking to the amendment, complained that the member for Bruce had treated him rather unfairly in moving the amendment he did, and had taken members by surprise. I think the member for Bruce, instead of taking the members by surprise and treating the Premier unfairly, was really aiding the Premier. We decided to take the motion in two parts, and the first part was disposed of because members for the most part were of one mind in regard to it, and by doing so we saved the time of the meeting. Then the member for Bruce saw his way to move an amendment to the second part. The honourable gentleman could, if he had liked, have moved that amendment if the motion had not been divided at all, and every member could have spoken to it on the main question. If, on the other hand, the honourable member had not moved the motion at all it would not have altered the debate. Every member had the right to speak on the second motion as we are doing now, and instead of being accused of treating the honourable gentleman unfairly we are aiding him in getting the business more conveniently arranged. The reason I am speaking this evening is that I think it is the right time for members to speak if they intend to speak at all, because I have no doubt that in a very short time we shall be asked to record our votes as to whether we believe in this amendment or otherwise, and it will not be much use speaking after we have pledged ourselves. I did not speak on the first question because I did not think it was a matter that required much to be said about it—that is, the question of whether the Premier should go Home, or otherwise. In fact, I felt some surprise that we should be asked that question. It seems to me a matter that members of the House should not be consulted on necessarily, more particularly Opposition members. It is entirely a question for the Premier himself and his colleagues to decide. We are all of opinion that the Parliament of New Zealand should be represented at the Conference, and it is for the Government to say who should go to represent them there. It seems to me, however, that it is more than strange that we should be called together to decide what is a trivial matter, when a little while ago the Premier did not think it reasonable or right to call us together to decide a matter of giving a Dreadnought or two—to use his own words—to the Old Country. I maintain that the main function of members is to guard the interests of the taxpayers and of their constituents as far as the expenditure of money is concerned. I would not object to the gift of half a dozen Dreadnoughts if it was necessary for the safety of the Empire, but I do object to the Premier giving away from two to four million pounds without consulting the representatives of the people, and that is all I mean to say at the present time with reference to the Dreadnought offer. But it was far more important that we should have been called together to decide that question than the one which is before us now. The Premier, I think, should do one of two things: he should either go Home himself, and leave an Acting-Premier to carry on the business of the country—and I take it there are among his colleagues some who would be capable of acting during his absence, just as the Premier acted on a former occasion in the absence of his late chief. Just as no advantage was taken of the Government then, I feel sure the same consideration would be extended to whoever might fill the position now. Then, if the Premier does not feel justified in going Home himself, he could send some one else to represent him and the country at the Conference at Home. Some members of the House will remember the summer session we had some years ago, and it will be admitted on all sides, I think, that it was an exceedingly unsatisfactory session. I venture to say if we have a similar session next summer it will prove just as unsatisfactory. The new members of the House should consider this matter very seriously. Members who have had experience of parliamentary life know that at the close of a session members are more or less knocked up; and after a summer session they are ten times more so, when the work has a more exhausting effect than in the cold weather. And not only that, but in a short summer session the business is slummed through, for the simple reason that no Government can keep members together after Christmas. The consequence is that any number of Bills which ought to be dealt with are put on one side and not touched at all. That is exactly what will take place if we postpone the session to next summer. Then, the Premier said that so far as the public-works estimates were concerned they could be brought down only one month later than they would under the ordinary condition of affairs.

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.

Mr. WRIGHT (Wellington South).—Sir Joseph Ward and gentlemen,—I should like to say that as one of the new members of the House I am not used to the forms of the House. I am glad, therefore, that this is not the House in session, and also that you are the Acting-Speaker, because I realise that you are exceedingly kindly in your nature, and not hard on members if they stray from the point. I feel sorry also, Sir, as I am so unused to this sort of business—the talking being on the one side. I had been led to believe before I entered the House that a member on one side would speak, and then a member of the other side would follow. Evidently I was wrongly informed. I say I am sorry that the big guns should be bombarding you like this, without a man on the other side to reply to them. I wish that I could take up the cudgels on your behalf. When I see one man receiving all the blows I feel that I should like to take his part; but I regret that, after listening carefully to what you have said and to the debate that has followed, I cannot do this. I am sorry to detain honourable gentlemen who are anxious to come to a division, but I believe it is the duty, particularly of members for the cities, to take note of this important situation, and to deal with it thoroughly. I want to reply as briefly as I can to some of the remarks that the Right Hon. the Premier has made, and I trust the right honourable gentleman will believe me when I say that I intend no personal reference to himself, because for himself personally I have a strong admiration, as I have for every man who makes his way in the world. But apart from that there is the political aspect, and in this respect, at all events, I differ from him. The right honourable gentleman said that if it had not been for the offer of the Dreadnought we should not have heard of a Naval Conference at all. I think that after listening to the debate the right honourable gentleman will surely agree that this is hardly correct, because the Dreadnought offer was apart altogether from the meeting of the Naval Conference. The evidence is overwhelming that Canada was originally at the bottom of that Naval Conference movement; the Dreadnought offer came in in a secondary way, and naturally the Imperial Government brought everything together, and focussed it in this Conference. I therefore think that the right honourable gentleman, when he comes to revise his speech, will see that the Dreadnought offer was entirely independent of the Naval Conference, and that that Conference originated in another way. The right honourable gentleman also said that the value of the Imperial Conference cannot be overestimated. That is quite right. And I want to say this: that as a member of this House—whether I am in it for one, two, or three years, or wherever I am—I am solidly in favour of the British Empire; and I stand not as a “Little-Englander,” but as one who is prepared to go any length with the right honourable gentleman in the defence of the British Empire. I say this because there are not wanting signs that any man who opposes the right honourable gentleman’s proposition will be branded as a “Little-Englander.” The cry of patriotism will be worked up against him, and the country will be told, “These are the people who are unpatriotic, who want to see the country pass into the hands of a foreign nation.” Why, the argument is unreasonable, because, apart from every degree of patriotism, every man with any common-sense at all knows perfectly well that if Great Britain were conquered by an enemy New Zealand would certainly pass out of her hands; and every man in New Zealand knows perfectly well that, however faulty the Constitution may be, however many mistakes Great Britain may make, yet to be under the British flag is to be under the finest flag that ever floated. Therefore we are not “Little-Englanders.” I will not allow honourable gentlemen on the other side to say that I am a “Little-Englander,” because every time it is said I shall follow it up and deny it. It has become a practice, I have noticed, in the political world to take up a cry, and, if a man sits quietly by, the public assume that the cry is true. But I am not built that way. I have some Irish blood in me, and when such a statement is made I will pull the man up wherever he is. Now, the right honourable gentleman, in pointing out the importance of the Imperial Conference, and with a view to showing the great danger we were in as an Empire, alluded to something that Lord Charles Beresford had said. It was on the 20th of April that Lord Charles Beresford said that “if the truth were known there would be a panic.” Well, unfortunately, that statement is out of date. There is a later one by Lord Charles Beresford which knocks that statement into a cocked hat. Lord Charles was talking about the scare business, and about our being frightened, and he said,—

“What sense is there in working up a panic? As a matter of fact there is no panic, and there will be no panic if fussy politicians and hustling journalists will only use a little restraint and some common-sense. It is nonsense to talk of a scare. We can strengthen our navy without becoming cowards. And because I demand a strong navy there is no reason why I should become a scaremonger.”

Now, this statement by Lord Charles Beresford was made after the one the right honourable gentleman has read to Parliament to-night. This was on the 22nd April. Of course, it is possible that the statement quoted by the Premier was made at an after-dinner speech—and sometimes the speakers are not then responsible for the speeches they make. This speech was made on another occasion, and ought, I think, to have greater weight. Then, the right honourable gentleman said that unless Parliament adjourned he could not represent us. I recognise that there are two distinct questions, and I recognise that the Right Hon. the Premier has a perfect right to please himself if he wishes to go; but that is a totally different issue from the other one, and I think that at the next general election those honourable gentlemen who are now so readily supporting this resolution will find that the people of the country are not so much in favour of it as they think. There is a strong feeling that the business of the House should go on. That is the feeling of the country—at all events, of this part of it—and I should like to know why Parliament should not go on. I say the two questions are distinct, and should be divorced one from the other. That is the attitude the country is taking up, and, to put it in a plain way, is it not a want of confidence in the electors? Is it not saying, in plain English, that they have sent seventy-nine fools to the House and only one wise man? It seems to me, Sir, this is the attitude the people are likely to take up. A remark

has been made to me by the man in the street, "Is there only one brain in the House to carry on the business of the country? Because the Premier wants to attend the Conference, does it follow that the whole seventy-nine of you have not sufficient brains to carry on the business of the country?" Some workshops have hundreds and hundreds of employees engaged, yet the business proceeds even if the head of the workshop is away. We have drifted into what is called the one-man system... We have only one man, and, that one man having two functions to attend to at the one time, we are in a quandary, as it is unscientific that he should be in two places at the same time. I suggest that it would be a good thing if the Premier educated some other member of the Ministry to take his place. There are fifty things that may cause the Premier's absence. I think it would be splendid training if some one of his lieutenants were to take up the running of the business of the country while he is away. The Premier's argument against that is to this effect: that he should be here as head of the Government. Do you know, Sir, that you have got a majority of twenty-five over any vote likely to be brought against you on any critical division?

An Hon. MEMBER.—What about the land question?

Mr. WRIGHT.—I think the honourable gentleman might turn out all right even in regard to the land question. With such a majority, do you think that any mischief can be done by the member for Franklin? I do not think the argument is a strong one. I do not think any mischief will happen to the party if you go away. Now, I want to refer to the High Commissioner. I was under the impression that it was his business to represent New Zealand at these Conferences. We pay him £2,000 a year, and it would appear that his principal duty is to show visitors from New Zealand the sights of London, to attend banquets, and drink champagne. If that is all he has to do, there are plenty of men in New Zealand who will be prepared to drink champagne and attend banquets for less than £2,000 a year. With regard to the confidential telegram which the Premier sent to the editors of newspapers, other members have criticized his action as to that matter; but I want to point this out: that he led us to believe it was a confidential telegram, and therefore he could not read it. But I may say that it is open to the sender of a confidential communication to remove the bond as to its confidential nature. I want to know if the Government sent a confidential telegram as to the representation of New Zealand at the Conference. I know it may be presumption on my part to give you a suggestion as to the danger you are running in regard to the proposed adjournment of the House, but it is only fair that I should give it you for what it is worth. The man in the street says you are adjourning Parliament because the Government is afraid to face the music. Mind you, I do not say the man in the street is right, but when the man in the street gets an idea into his head it is generally pretty hard to shift it. He says the position is this: there are a lot of questions that need dealing with, and the Government does not seem disposed to deal with them, therefore the Government intends to shut up the House, and when the Premier comes back public feeling will have cooled down to a certain extent. That is the object in adjourning the House. I think this is a very wrong suggestion for the man in the street to make, but the simplest way of dealing with it would be to give the man in the street the lie, and let the House go on with the business. I have not a very great deal more to say, but I want to give a few reasons why the House should not adjourn. I do not think there was anything in the Premier's suggestion that the House would pass embarrassing resolutions in his absence. I do not think the House would do such a thing as that; even the Opposition—bad as the Premier thinks they are—would scarcely do that. I want to deal with one or two subjects that have already been brought up, but I will deal with them in a different way so as not to weary the House. The unemployed question is not understood by yourself, Sir. You have no idea of it. Since I have been a member of the House I have been greatly distressed by the number of people seeking situations. Honourable members on the other side may laugh, but if they lived in Wellington they would find little to laugh at. There are scores and scores of deserving people who cannot get employment. The right honourable gentleman said the Government were employing more men in New Zealand than at any other time. That may be so; but is it not a fact that the Government will not employ single men? Does not the Labour Department say they can find work for some married men, and that is all they can do? I dare say it is all they can do; but there are scores of single men with people dependent upon them who cannot get a day's work.

An Hon. MEMBER.—Will they do a day's work if they can get it?

Mr. WRIGHT.—I will bring the honourable gentleman fifty to-morrow who would do a good day's work if he will tell them where they can get it.

An Hon. MEMBER.—Put them on the land.

Mr. WRIGHT.—As the honourable member for Christchurch North has already said, they cannot get land. There is no land for them. They are balloted out every time, and are tramping about from place to place. I repeat what I said—the unemployed question is a grave one; and if for no other reason the business of the House should go on in the endeavour to alleviate the sufferings of deserving people. You do not always come across the deserving cases; they bear and suffer in silence, and say nothing. You have to find them out if you can, and they exist in Wellington. What about the business men who are suffering on account of the monetary stringency? What about the complaint known as miner's disease, and the questions that were raised in connection with the insurance of the men? These are questions that ought to be dealt with. The House has admitted its responsibility in the matter. How much is the action taken by the Government going to cost the Dominion?

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—It has not cost us a single shilling to date.

Mr. WRIGHT.—That may be so, but how are we to know that it is not going to cost us a great deal? The Premier says it has not cost us a single shilling. I am glad if it is so, and I hope he is right. What about other questions that have been alluded to by different members in the course of this debate? All these questions should be dealt with. In conclusion, I raise my

emphatic protest against the adjournment of the House. I protest against it in the name of the people who sent seventy-nine members here as well as the Premier to represent them. I protest in the name of the Premier's colleagues, because I believe they are being passed over unjustly. I protest in the name of the Government supporters, because I believe they are anxious to carry on the work of the country. I protest in the name of the business people, and in the name of all others who will suffer by the adjournment of Parliament. I say that Parliament should go on.

Mr. McLAREN (Wellington East).—After the genial sample of Irish humour which the honourable member for Wellington South has given you, I think it is only right that you should allow me the privilege of submitting just a few words of Scotch logic. I do not think it will be at all out of place if I offer something in that direction, because from what I have heard to-day and this evening I think there has been too much of dealing with certain words without defining what those words mean. Let me say here that I was very pleased indeed to hear the Premier ask that this matter should be dealt with from other than a party standpoint. I was also pleased to hear the leader of the Opposition say that his party had no intention of dealing with it from the party side. I was pleased with that, because I have read so many illustrations of the wickedness of Labour parties in trying to rule the country's affairs on the basis of caucus government that I thought it was a pleasant thing to find that the Government of New Zealand was not tainted with anything of that kind. But then I remembered that there had been two caucus meetings—one of the Government party and one of the Opposition. Now, I have the honour of being a little party in myself. There is no need to call a caucus meeting of this party, because the party is always there and is perfectly solid on the question that is before us now—the question of whether the business of the country shall be attended to or whether it shall not. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind with regard to that question, because I do not believe there is any doubt in the minds of the mass of the wage-earners in this country whom I particularly represent. I believe that they fully expect this Parliament to go on with the business of the country, in the face of the depressed state of affairs that we find ourselves hampered and burdened with at the present time. I would like to draw honourable members' attention to a quotation read by the Premier to-day—some words of wisdom delivered by Sir Edward Grey. It is the side of the defence question that has been somewhat overlooked since the time of such British statesmen as John Bright and W. E. Gladstone, and it has not been given that attention in our country which its importance requires. The quotation that I have to draw attention to is one of vast importance. It is that statement of Sir Edward Grey's where he says that "European nations to-day are spending one-half of their revenue for the purpose of killing each other." Now, I am not concerned whether I am called a "Little-Englander" or not, because I believe that my nationality is a sufficient guarantee of my patriotism. I do not bother my head about any one who seeks to question my loyalty to the Empire or country; but I want to say here that I know sufficient of the world by this time to understand that there was a certain degree of truth in the blunt utterance of Dr. Johnson when he defined patriotism as "the last refuge of a scoundrel." I do not for a moment suggest that there is any one who has expressed loyalty here in this conference who is not absolutely sincere in the expression of his loyalty; but I do say, and with all due sense of my responsibility in uttering it, that there are forces at work in regard to the conflicts between the nations which are dangerous to the democracy. Now, I wish for a moment to refer to the incident of the Premier quoting a socialist leader in the Old Country, Mr. Robert Blatchford. The right honourable gentleman might have been still fairer if he had pointed out that Mr. Robert Blatchford, the socialist labourite, a member of such party in the Old Country, is not saddled with the same responsibility as such men as Mr. Keir Hardie and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, and those gentlemen take an entirely different view of the situation from Mr. Robert Blatchford. Although I have every respect for Mr. Blatchford, I cannot forget that at the time of the unfortunate South African raid—for I do not think it can be described as anything else—he was most enthusiastic in support of sending troops there to help to paint South Africa—what shall I term the colour?—a pale-black yellow—I think that is just about what it was. Well, there were other leaders in England and these colonies who disagreed with Mr. Blatchford at that time, and who still disagree with him; but I will tell the Premier that there is one question upon which the Labour party of England, Australia, and New Zealand are absolutely united, and it is this: that before the people can adequately defend their countries, and defend the lands in which they live, we must first capture the lands for the people. That is the position. You will find such a writer as Robert Blatchford and other leaders of the English Labour party appealing on this ground: that this economic basis of the defence question should be considered. I am afraid we are also disposed to neglect that side of the question in this country. We neglect it to this extent: that we are failing to fill up the unoccupied lands of this Dominion with people who should be ready to meet the enemy if occasion arose. That is, I submit, where the question of defence comes in, and it has a close relation to the question of whether Parliament should go on with the business or not. I do not set up as being a military expert, or an expert on the question of unemployment, although on the latter question I think I may claim to know as much about the state of the labour-market as most of the members here assembled; and I say when you are going to deal with the question of unemployment there is an absolute necessity that the advice of Aristotle should be followed, which is that you should first define your terms. For instance, as to men who are working on one day of the week, or who are earning on an average 10s. to £1 a week, are they employed or unemployed? In my judgment they are unemployed, and they form part of the unemployed problem which this as well as other countries have to face. I have some knowledge of the distressful conditions which exist at the present time. I know, for instance, that on the Wellington wharves there are between four and five hundred men in excess of what is required. I know also that if you take the building trade you will find that the Building Trades Labourers' Union at this time last

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

say, however, that it appears to me that, the right honourable gentleman being at Home, questions might arise there of an urgent character, and, if such did arise, I think it would be in the interests of the Conference, in the interests of this Dominion, and much to the advantage of the Premier himself in the representations he might desire to make, to be able to consult with his own Parliament, it being in session. And that is how it appears to me that it would be in every way desirable that the business of the Parliament should continue. It has been stated already on one side and another that it is not desired to make this a party question, and I believe that the Right Hon. the Premier and the leader of the Opposition could agree upon certain terms so that there would not be any possibility of advantage being taken of the Premier's absence. I believe that could be done, and I believe there is sufficient work for the Parliament to consider outside of some of the special questions that the Premier would no doubt desire to present. For that reason I must take up the position that the amendment is in the right direction, and that we should affirm the proposition that the business of this country should go on, and that it should go on not merely in the interests of those whom we are representing to-day, but for the reason that there is an absolute necessity if the country is to continue to meet the burdens that must be placed upon it by an ever greater increase of armaments and of naval and military expenditure—if we have to meet these great charges, then I say there is an absolute necessity that the business of our Parliament should go on to the full, so that we may be able to have our country in a flourishing condition to meet the exigencies as they arise.

Mr. LUKE (Wellington Suburbs).—Sir Joseph Ward and fellow-members,—I shall make my remarks short, because I acknowledge that other members have done greater justice to the subject than I am capable of rendering. I wish to say, however, that in my opinion we have not gone altogether the right way about treating this subject. I agree most thoroughly that this Dominion should give a Dreadnought, or even two if necessary, for the purpose of taking part in Imperial defence. I think scarcely any one in the House would fail to agree that things have changed considerably at Home. My own conviction is that you are more particular about going Home so as to be able to find out something connected with the offer, and I think you will come back with the proposition that, instead of the giving of a Dreadnought, a different arrangement should be entered into. I say this with the most sincere desire to do the proper thing, but I say you should not ask the House to stop its business to suit your convenience. I regret speaking in this manner, but one must be honest to one's-self and honest to one's constituents. I think the action that has been taken in proposing the adjourning of Parliament is a very serious reflection upon your colleagues. We have heard a good deal about what work can be carried on during the session. If I thought the members of the Opposition were going to take any mean advantage of the absence of the Premier I would support the proposition that he brought forward this afternoon; but I believe they are too honourable to do anything of the kind, or to attempt to take any advantage of the Premier being at the other side of the globe while the business of the House was being carried on. We heard a great deal some time ago about timber. I think the work of the Timber Commission will require a good deal of overhauling in this House. Your very able colleague the Hon. Mr. Millar made some suggestions about the railways of the Dominion, and those suggestions do not run in parallel lines with your own. That also is a matter of deep concern to the country, and it is a matter that should be taken into consideration by the House at the earliest possible moment. Then, there is also the question of hospitals and charitable aid. That question was considered by a conference of local authorities, and suggestions were made in respect to future legislation on the subject. That is a question that requires consideration; it involves a very important policy, and I think the House would be very well employed in considering that and other matters. I know that you built up a great deal of the urgency with which you treated this Imperial Conference question from the statements made by Mr. McKenna in the House of Commons. Mr. McKenna said that the question was burdensome, and that it must be faced, and that, at whatever cost, Great Britain must carry out a programme in keeping with that of Germany. It was said that in 1912 Germany would have seventeen Dreadnoughts as against twenty possessed by Great Britain. I do not think the Imperial Government is so much concerned whether we give one or two Dreadnoughts, but I say we are concerned very much whether the Premier goes Home. I say that it is the bounden duty of the House to carry on the business of the country even during the absence of the Premier, and I feel sure that during the Premier's absence the Government would not be embarrassed. I regret very much that I shall have to vote against the honourable gentleman on the question of the adjournment, but I have come deliberately to the conclusion that we should go on with the business of the House.

Mr. ANDERSON (Mataura).—I did not intend to speak to-night. As a new member, I thought it was proper to remain silent; but I feel impelled to refer to the remarks of the member for Christchurch North in regard to the telegram sent by the Premier to the editors of certain newspapers. I did not think that the Dreadnought question had much to do with the conference this afternoon. I thought we were here to consider whether the Prime Minister should go Home, and as to whether Parliament should go on with the business of the country in his absence; but the Dreadnought was mentioned, and the question of the telegram came up. You, Sir, did the Press of the Dominion a very great justice when you said that the gentlemen conducting it were honourable men. I am a journalist of very many years' standing. I heard the member for Christchurch North read a telegram from yourself that had been regarded as confidential by the editors of the newspapers of the Dominion. And I was astounded to hear him do so. I do not believe that he received that telegram from a member of my profession; and, if he did, I am very much astonished indeed. I am not going to defend the Prime Minister's action in sending that telegram. That is altogether apart from the question. But I will say this: that when I, in common with other members, was asked my opinion about the offer of a Dreadnought, I was to a very great extent guided in what I said by the telegram of the Prime Minister, for I had seen that telegram, which was sent to the paper in which I am interested. There are other ways by which

a nation can lose its liberties than by the force of arms. It will lose some of them if it allows a Ministry to expend money without consulting the people's representatives. And when I was consulted on the question of the gift of a Dreadnought, these are the views I expressed; but I said I thought you must have some other information which justified you in making the gift, and there must be some great national crisis of which you had knowledge. What was my astonishment, on reading the despatches to the Australian Federal House, to find there was no justification at all for the hysterical manner in which the offer had been made. Had the enemy been at the gates of any part of the nation, I should have said probably you had a shadow of right; but even then the Government of this or any other British dominion would strain the Constitution by pledging four millions of the country's money without consulting Parliament. We have been called together to-day to decide whether or not you should go Home. We might just as well have been called together two months ago and consulted about the pledge of four millions. I am in favour of giving not only one Dreadnought, but two, and of taxing ourselves to the last shilling, if it is necessary for the safety of the nation; but I am satisfied the Government should not vote any money without consulting the people's representatives. I intend to hand down, as far as I can, the liberties I am here to protect, as far as I am able, to my successor as I found them. I do not think the question of the Government's offer of a Dreadnought should have been brought into the discussion to-night. We should have been simply consulted as to whether or not the Prime Minister should go Home. But that is a question that should very well have been decided by the Ministry. If it was competent for the Ministry to decide the question of appropriating a grant of four millions, it is comparatively a mere nothing for them to appoint a delegate to a Conference. The business of the country could be carried on satisfactorily in the Prime Minister's absence. You have had two months in which to drill a lieutenant, and this should have been done. From long experience of at least one of your colleagues, I am satisfied that he is quite competent to carry on the business of the country for the next three months.

An Hon. MEMBER.—Is he willing?

Mr. ANDERSON.—I do not know; I am not in his confidence, but he is quite able to carry it on. The condition of the labour-market seems to be very much more acute in the North Island than in the South. It reminds me of what occurred years ago, when a number of the population of this country drifted to Australia. From the experience gained in the years that have gone, I think Parliament should sit continuously till some means has been found to stop what appears to be the beginning of a similar exodus. I trust also that during the session we shall do something in the matter of compulsory military training. In my district Volunteer officers of long experience say the system of Volunteering has been a failure. So far as they can see, it is impossible to put it on a proper footing, and they privately and publicly affirm the necessity for the compulsory training of all our young people. There are other reasons that have been adduced by previous speakers which warrant us in insisting on the business of the country being proceeded with. We are all agreed that the Prime Minister should go Home, and it is to be hoped that when he is there he will be able to do something that will be of advantage to this country. When he returns he may be able to bring about an improved system of local defence. He is undoubtedly the proper man to go Home, but no reason has been adduced why the business of the country should be neglected for the next three months during his absence.

Mr. BROWN (Napier).—Sir Joseph Ward and gentlemen,—I feel, as a new member, that I should indicate which way I am going to vote. I must say at the outset that I am a strong supporter of the Premier. I have already voted for his going Home, and I will also support him in proroguing the House. I regret, from my point of view, some of the remarks which came from the Opposition in connection with the offer that has been made to the British Government of a Dreadnought. I take it that every member of Parliament is in favour of England being helped; but we are not all in agreement with the suddenness with which Sir Joseph Ward made his offer. That, however, is only a matter of detail. Sir Joseph Ward only did what any member of the Opposition would have done if he had been sitting on the Treasury benches, and in offering a Dreadnought to the Mother-country the other side of the House would have supported him. I have a letter here which I do not know if I would be in order in referring to, but I may say at once that it is not marked "Strictly confidential." It is from a gentleman now in England who some time back visited the district which I have the honour to represent, and I had the opportunity of paying him some slight attention. He thought fit, on his return to the Mother-country, to write me this letter, and, with your permission, I will just read it:—

"DEAR MR. VIGOR BROWN,—I send you a *Standard* with an account of the great meeting at the Guildhall on Wednesday. It was a great and stirring sight to see the hall crowded with London's responsible citizens, to see the tense earnestness of the audience as Mr. Balfour and other speakers spoke on the critical situation in which the nation finds itself owing to gross dereliction of duty on the part of those in power.

"What I want specially to mention was the heartily appreciative and enthusiastic manner in which the name of New Zealand was received and her noble example set by offering the Mother-country one, or, if necessary, two battleships. Believe me, the feeling that the 'lion's cubs' over the seas are ready to rally round the old mother is very deep in the hearts of all those who are proud of their birthright as Britons—and they are, after all, every one. We don't count those miserable 'Little-Englanders' who consider the fate of their parish pump before the Empire."

Now, gentlemen, I do not suppose there is a single "Little-Englander" in this Parliament. The letter goes on,—

"You in New Zealand may be sure that your loyalty to the Old Country is appreciated very heartily, and I feel humiliated that Mr. Asquith did not frankly and freely accept the offer now without his halting condition of 'if it is necessary.' That is the general feeling. Good luck and prosperity to New Zealand!"

Now, that is from a gentleman who passed about two or three months in this country and

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.”

I am quite sure the Premier does not know the extent of the unemployed difficulty in the centres.

Hon. MEMBERS.—Oh!

Mr. T. E. TAYLOR.—I am quite certain of it. I would sooner take the word of the honourable member for Wellington East, Mr. McLaren, on a matter of this kind than I would accept the statement of honourable members who have not his intimate knowledge of labour-conditions, because he is the only labour representative in this Parliament, and he represents the class of people who are most deserving, because they are the most needy. I am quite sure I must have had half a dozen applicants for employment a week—one a day for weeks before I left Christchurch—and not one of those people would communicate their position to the newspapers, or would answer any inquiry such as has been made in Christchurch as to the extent of the unemployed difficulty. And where we may know of five hundred in a city, I am pretty sure you can double that number if you take into account the people who are only partly employed or who are unemployed, but who conceal their position from the general public. I am certain that we shall be doing not only an exceedingly unwise but an exceedingly wrong thing if this House adjourns while the Premier is absent.

Mr. BUCHANAN (Wairarapa).—I wish to put a question to the Hon. the Minister of Labour. He has been reported in the Press as having stated that last month nine hundred co-operative labourers were discharged, and that he supposed an equal number would be similarly dealt with during this month. I wish to ask the honourable gentleman if he has been correctly reported.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I think that is quite beside the subject-matter of this discussion.

The conference divided on the question, "That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the motion."

AYES, 45.

Arnold	Field	Macdonald	Seddon
Baume	Forbes	McKenzie, R.	Sidey
Brown	Fowlds	Mackenzie, T.	Stallworthy
Buddo	Graham	Millar	Taylor, E. H.
Buxton	Greenslade	Ngata	Te Rangihiroa
Carroll	Guinness	Parata	Thomson, J. C.
Clark	Hall	Poland	Ward
Craigie	Hanan	Poole	Wilford.
Davey	Hogan	Reed	<i>Tellers.</i>
Dillon	Hogg	Ross	Colvin
Duncan, T.	Jennings	Russell	Laurenson.
Ell	Lawry		

NOES, 30.

Anderson	Guthrie	Massey	Taylor, T. E.
Bollard	Herdman	Newman	Thomson, G. M.
Buchanan	Hine	Nosworthy	Witty
Buick	Lang	Okey	Wright.
Dive	Luke	Pearce	<i>Tellers.</i>
Duncan, J.	McLaren	Phillipps	Allen
Fisher	Malcolm	Rhodes	Hardy.
Fraser	Mander	Scott	

Majority for, 15.

Amendment negatived, and motion agreed to.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—It only remains for me again to thank members for coming here to consider this important matter. The Government now know what to do in connection with the business to submit to Parliament on the 10th instant, and will act accordingly.

Mr. FRASER (Wakatipu).—Before you adjourn I should like to draw attention to one matter. Probably you may think it wise to alter the motion slightly before bringing it before Parliament. I think the date fixed is the 30th September, and it has just struck me that that may prove very inconvenient indeed, not only to the House, but to your colleagues and the country, if an emergency arose for calling Parliament together at an earlier date, when, as you have already told us, the law would not permit of that being done. Perhaps it would be better that you should think over the subject before presenting it to Parliament.

The Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD.—I am very glad you have mentioned the point. I can only say that in the very unique circumstances in which we have met I recognise how much I am indebted to honourable members for allowing the business to be carried on in the absence of a chairman in the ordinary way and without the great advantage of Standing Orders. I must express my appreciation of the courtesy you have extended to me in my capacity as chairman of this assembly, and for the assistance you have all rendered in lightening my task in that respect.

The conference terminated at ten minutes past one o'clock a.m. (Tuesday).

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