

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),