

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,