

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?