

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.