

Defence

The result of the referendum for military training will enable the Government to give full effect to its policy that the Armed Forces of New Zealand should be properly balanced, organized, and trained in peace to discharge, if ever the need should arise, our responsibilities in war. For many years the Government has emphasized that we must take increasing responsibility for our own defence. The plans for our Forces will enable us to do that and, at the same time, help to ease the burden which for so many years has been, and is still, borne by the United Kingdom.

Our naval Forces will be trained to defend trade and communications in New Zealand and the South Pacific. They will be capable of operating with the Forces of Australia, the United Kingdom, and any other of our allies in support of our common objectives.

The task of the Air Force in the South Pacific complements that of the Navy. The defence of trade and communications in this area is their joint responsibility. Fiji to the north of New Zealand occupies an important position in relation to the defence of trade and communications in the South Pacific, and special arrangements with respect to the defence of the Colony have already been made.

Now that the electors have decided in favour of the military training scheme the Regular Army can begin to discharge its primary role of training the Territorial Force. With a military training scheme New Zealand can ensure the maximum facilities for the defence of its own shores and also make its contribution towards the defence of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Whilst the training scheme will enable us to meet the military situation it will also be of real personal benefit to our young men and to society.

The estimated cost of the full defence scheme in an average year is £(m.)17.25, but it will take upwards of three to four years to reach this figure, which covers both recurrent and capital costs, including full provision for purchase of the modern equipment that will be required for all arms of the Forces. In terms of cost per head of population the full scheme will represent an expenditure of approximately £9 per head. The present expenditure from the Consolidated Fund is, of course, less, and for this financial year represents £5 14s. 2d. per head. Though these costs are still below the present average for the United Kingdom—viz., £15 2s.—they are much greater than the average of £1 13s. 6d. per head of population in 1939.

We can be justly proud both of what has been done and what is planned in defence. When these plans are developed we shall be able to meet our obligations for the defence of New Zealand and the South