

Fourth Day.
20 April 1907.

MILITARY
DEFENCE.
(Sir Frederick
Borden.)

there is a provision within the law of Canada that if it is desirable to contribute a force to Imperial defence abroad, Parliament shall be called together, the idea being that each case shall be dealt with when it arises

Now I come more to the concrete part of Mr. Haldane's statement, particularly to the most important proposal, the resolution which we have before us, with reference to the establishment of the General Staff. I would like to know exactly, if I could, whether it is intended that the General Staff which is responsible to the Home Government and to the Army Council and the Secretary of State for War, is to be linked in with General Staffs in the different parts of the Empire, or whether this central General Staff is to have independent authority throughout the Empire and in the different Dominions.

Mr. HALDANE: Not independent authority. It would be a training school which would send out and lend out experts. Members of your local General Staff might also be members of the Imperial General Staff.

Sir FREDERICK BORDEN: It seems to me that that is a most important consideration. I would certainly favour it strongly, and as you have said, Mr. Haldane, Canada has already established a General Staff in embryo, and we hope to develop it. We recognise the absolute necessity for the existence of such a body, but it really seems to me we should have our own General Staff responsible to the Canadian Government—and in the same way all the other Dominions—which might, as you suggested, I think, exchange officers with your staff; but I scarcely think it would do to have officers in the different Dominions who were responsible in the first place to the Secretary of State for War here.

Mr. HALDANE: The Imperial General Staff for this purpose is a purely advisory body.

Sir FREDERICK BORDEN: So long as that is understood I would concur in that view, and I am very strongly indeed in favour of the idea of exchange of officers. I think we should do that, and we are doing it between the different departments of the various services of this country and the Dominion. I think, however, it is absolutely necessary that that point should be thoroughly established, because I can see difficulties in the way of an officer, for instance, in Canada considering himself to be in a position to advise, whether directly or indirectly, the War Office, without responsibility to the Minister who has charge of such matters in Canada and without responsibility to the principal military authority there. I do not wish to elaborate that point any further, but I am glad to know that you entirely concur in that view.

Mr. HALDANE: Certainly, and a memorandum will be drawn up by Sir Neville Lyttelton which will be submitted to you making that perfectly clear in detail, if we agree to carry this resolution into effect.