

Fourth Day.
20 April 1907.

MILITARY
DEFENCE.
(Mr. Haldane.)

breaks out. You are at an enormous disadvantage if you commence to organize in concert for the first time after the breaking-out of war. The third paper relates to the patterns and provision of equipment and stores for Colonial forces. The chief point made is that it is essential that the small arms supplied to any force which may have to act side by side with troops from the United Kingdom shall fire the same ammunition as that supplied to the latter. A difference in ammunition is one of the greatest curses in war time. This paper also emphasizes the necessity for the provision of adequate reserves of stores in peace time. The fourth paper urges the desirability of the self-governing Dominions, where possible and without interfering with their own arrangements, giving their orders for ordnance stores, particularly arms and ammunition, through the War Office, and it points out that expedition and economy are likely to be secured if this is done. That is a business matter for discussion. There is a great deal to recommend it when you come to work it out in detail.

A very important thing touched on in this connection is the training of officers. We are just now endeavouring to organize a reserve of officers. We have had a Committee sitting which has presented a preliminary scheme, and I know that the question is also engaging the attention of the self-governing Dominions at this time. If we could do something to make that reserve of officers Imperial in the same sense as the General Staff is Imperial, so that you could give us from your reserve assistance in time of a great war, I am sure it would be a great source of strength. Besides, I need not point out that any organization of this kind is of the very greatest assistance to peace, because it profoundly impresses the mind of foreign General Staffs who cannot be sure what reserve we have behind us when we have troops and officers organized over this tremendously wide area. The general point made in this paper is that to attain these objects probably the most desirable of all courses is the one I have indicated, that the General Staff should be Imperial in the widest sense; and we point out that we shall welcome Colonial officers in its ranks very cordially, and we shall be very glad to send officers to you to take their places in it. We do not want to ask you, unless you wish to do it, to double the number of your own officers by sending some here while you have to provide for other officers in their places at home. If you like we should be very glad to send out General Staff officers to take the places of those you send to us and in that way to provide a circulation. Our great object must be to make the General Staff an imperial school of military thought, all the members of which are imbued with the same traditions, accustomed to look at strategical problems from the same point of view, and acquainted with the principles and theories generally accepted at headquarters.

The Imperial Reserve of Officers is a thing which I think may be better discussed in detail. It is so complicated that I do not think we could profitably go into it in this very short Conference; but on all those points the War Office is a home for you so long as you choose to be here; and if any of the gentlemen present who would like to follow out these things more in detail will come to us, we have prepared all the information. We should be very glad if, for instance, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Sir Frederick Borden will communicate with us, either personally or through General Lake, fully upon these points of detail as they come up; and I wish to say the same with regard to the other Premiers.

I think I have really now put before you the general points. There are some minor ones, which again are matters for discussion in detail. If we get into the field together it is very desirable that we should be under one military code, and as far as possible we ought to arrange that whatever local arrangements may require in time of peace, it should always be kept in view