

Fourth Day.
23 April 1907.

MILITARY
DEFENCE.
(Sir Joseph
Ward.)

afforded to us to-day in regard to the defence of the Empire. I wish to say on behalf of the country I represent that I look upon it as of very great importance to have heard the views of His Majesty's Ministers of the United Kingdom upon this great question of the defence of the Empire. I have read some of the papers—not all of them—very closely, that have been furnished by your staff and I indorse the sentiment already expressed that they will be most valuable, although some of them are of a confidential character, for the information of Parliament as well as for the guidance of the Administration that it is my privilege to represent here.

I would like to say I clearly understood from the observations of Mr. Haldane that what is suggested by him is in the direction of suggestion and not anything binding on the part of the colonies. What they may do will be of their voluntary act or of their voluntary co-operation and assistance in the direction of assisting and bringing about a general scheme that would be of advantage to the Empire as a whole. I am not going to take up the time of the Conference at any great length. I want to say that the aspect upon one point put forward by the Minister of Defence of the Dominion of Canada, as to the powers of his country to incur responsibilities outside of his own Dominion, apply with equal force to New Zealand. We are responsible for the expenditure incurred for the protection of our own country. Our people in the past have shown their readiness and will do so upon every occasion in the future, I have no doubt whatever, to adopt flexible conditions to meet extraordinary circumstances should they arise. Upon some of the points referred to as to the obligations upon the colony, my colleagues in New Zealand, and Parliament itself, will, I am confident, ratify and would undertake them in order to bring about a stronger and a better system for the general defence of the Empire. I do not purpose to go into details regarding the several suggestions. Reading them as a layman, though holding the position of Minister of Defence of our country, the proposals in the Memorandum signed by General Lyttelton are very valuable, and, generally speaking, those strategical conditions from the military point of view, our Colony would, I think, indorse. It is made very clear that it is the opinion of the General Staff, not the opinion of the Government of the United Kingdom. So far as trying to bring about uniformity from the expert point of view, I think the Council of Defence which we have established in New Zealand upon lines similar to that of the Old World would be very glad to co-operate with the military advisers of the British Government, who have in this Memorandum given most valuable suggestions. The possibility of assimilating War organization throughout the Empire is a high and worthy ideal to aim for. It is of the first consequence to Britain itself to have a thorough organization within its own borders as it is throughout the Empire for the purpose of maintaining its own position and that of its outlying possessions. We would be only too glad to co-operate in order to bring about that assimilation of organization throughout the Empire.

In reference to the desirability of having uniformity in patterns and provision of equipment and stores for Colonial forces, generally speaking I concur with the reservation which is made in No. 6, which I think Mr. Deakin quoted from that Memorandum, where it is suggested that war stores and materials should be obtained if possible through the War Office so long as it is recognised that we have the right, if we go for the same quality of ammunition, to make it in our own country—with that reservation I cordially indorse the sentiments expressed in respect to that. We already make a large quantity of ammunition in our own Colony for our own use, and we are likely to extend it. The suggestion contained in some of those Memoranda as to our using the same class of arms and ammunition is highly important in view of any contingency that may arise in the future calling for