

Fifth Day.
23 April 1907.

NAVAL DEFENCE.

Mr. DEAKIN : I am aware of that. Of course that estimate of the very long life of cordite is still theoretical, because there has been no cordite of that character for 60 or 70 years, though all the scientific calculations point that way. We see no difficulty in the conditions of temperature. If we make cordite we must fulfil those conditions; if we do not fulfil them we cannot do business. We do not look for mere profit. To sell you an inferior explosive for the protection of our own shores and shipping would be shortsighted economy; but on the assumption that we are able to satisfy you as to tests and storage, it would, or might, make a considerable difference to us even if we had only the supplying of certain portions of the annual ordinary consumption of the squadrons in the Indian, China, and Australian seas, the present area within which our squadron operates. It would be inexcusable to bring forward a detail of this kind, were it not to give you the opportunity of consulting your officers in the hope that you may in some way or other help us to improve our means of ammunition-supply, which would then be available for your squadrons in all grave emergencies. Other members of the Conference more competent than myself should cope with the great questions raised. We should have an opportunity of seeing your remarks in print. They most decidedly are serious enough for much consideration. Clear as is your exposition, it raises so many matters of moment to us that, to treat them as they deserve, more time for reflection and more detail would be required. I therefore do not touch on the question of coaling or the variety of other interesting problems suggested.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : Lord Elgin, and Gentlemen,—I begin by saying that the value of the different countries—I speak, of course, specially for the one that I represent—of having an opportunity of hearing the views of Lord Tweedmouth, as First Lord of the Admiralty, to whom we look as the head of the Naval Branch, is very important indeed. I want to convey for New Zealand my concurrence in the expressions that Lord Tweedmouth has given utterance to, that we should have confidence in the Board of Admiralty and in the British Government in connection with the Navy. I subscribe to that absolutely. The people in our country believe—and, of course, I am speaking on behalf of the people of our country—that the great interests, enormous as they are, extending throughout the Empire, must of necessity receive first consideration at the hands of the Board of Admiralty and of the British Government of the day. I am very glad indeed to hear Lord Tweedmouth say that it is his desire to make the position of the Empire more secure than it is at present. That great object is at the bottom of the representation that the Colonies have here in connection with Defence matters. We want to assist as far as we can in making our general position stronger and more secure than it is at present, though it is happily very strong indeed. I want to say that I fully indorse the view expressed by Lord Tweedmouth, that there is but one sea around our shores, and that with one sea and one Empire, there should in reality be but one Navy. The outcome of deliberations such as we are engaged in now, should be to place both ships and the disposition of the ships, and the distribution of the ships and the whole question of strategical work, entirely under the control of those at the pulse of the Empire—London; who are responsible in the time of war for the working-out of any engagements that may take place for the purpose of common defence. In any help that New Zealand may be able to give towards the building up of a stronger position, that main principle should be recognised, and will be, certainly by my Colony. We regard the custodians of the Navy, the Board of Admiralty, as those who, being at the seat or pulse of the Empire, are the authorities in times of war to govern the Navy. We also recognise that they are responsible for the defence of our commerce on the seas, either in our part of the world or elsewhere, which