

Fifth Day.
23 April 1907.

NAVAL DEFENCE.
(Dr. Smartt.)

pieces, are prepared to recognise that we should do everything, with the assistance of the Admiralty, to try and make that first line of defence, if possible, still stronger than it is at present.

On behalf of Cape Colony, I at once acknowledge that the contribution that we give at the present moment is not adequate to our position, and is not adequate to the services that the Navy renders to us. We are now trying to do something to infuse a spirit of enthusiasm into our young men to come forward and enrol themselves in a corps of Naval Volunteers, and I trust that the Admiralty will meet that corps by allowing it to be established as a force not of Naval Volunteers but of Royal Naval Volunteers. I am able to state that it is the intention of the Government to introduce a Bill into Parliament next Session whereby every member of that Naval Volunteer force will enrol not only for service in local waters, but for service in any part of the world that the British Admiralty might consider such service necessary should a period of danger unfortunately arise. We, to be able to keep up the necessary spirit of enthusiasm in a force of this sort, must have some means of giving them practical training; and I gather from what Lord Tweedmouth has said that the Admiralty will be prepared to treat sympathetically every portion of the Empire on a basis best suited to its individual requirements, and further will be prepared to do what would be very acceptable to the Cape; that is, allow us to take over a small ship, necessary for the training of these men, and, until other arrangements can be made, to devote to the up-keep of that ship a certain portion of the grant that the Cape and Natal now give towards the British Navy.

I also fully agree, and am perfectly certain that the people at the Cape will agree, in the necessity of assisting the Admiralty, that we outlying portions of the Empire should provide small craft, such as submarines and torpedo-boats, not alone for the defence of our shores, but to be joined on to any squadron sent from Great Britain in periods of great emergency, it being a great difficulty, or almost impossible, to send torpedo craft many thousands of miles to sea. As the Admiralty say they would welcome a departure of that sort, I think the people at the Cape, knowing that they were really fundamentally assisting in building up the Navy, would, when times improve, be prepared to increase their contribution; and I also presume that that would be the position of Natal. I hope that we would be joined in that position—especially as the spirit of federation is now so strongly evident in South Africa—by the inland States, that is the Transvaal, the Orange River Colony, and perhaps Rhodesia. I think everybody recognises the burden upon the British taxpayer. I should think at the present moment, Lord Tweedmouth, that the Admiralty is taking out of the general taxation of Great Britain something over 20*l.* out of every 100*l.* for the up-keep of the Navy. You are paying roughly, I suppose, 15*s.* or 16*s.* per head of your population. Well, in comparison with that, look at the contribution of the Cape—(50,000*l.* a year), and the contributions of the other portions of the Empire towards the up-keep of the Navy. It is about a sovereign, perhaps, out of every 100*l.* of the general revenue. We must recognise that while it is of the first importance to Great Britain to protect her enormous over-sea trade, it is also of equal importance to South Africa, and to the other portions of the British Empire, to protect their trade over the seas—which is of as great importance to them as the trade of Great Britain is to her. If the Admiralty would work out a scheme and discuss it with us, we would be prepared to see how far we could work up in that direction, so that our contribution would be of the greatest possible assistance to the Admiralty; and the assistance in this direction would naturally appeal much more forcibly to the people and give them a stronger individual interest in the fleet than simply a monetary contribution would do.