

Fifth Day.
23 April 1907.

NAVAL DEFENCE.
(Lord
Tweedmouth.)

Dr. Smartt made a great point that the Naval Volunteers should receive the title of "Royal." That depends, I think, chiefly on the local legislature passing a Bill registering the Naval Volunteers as a regular force. I think as soon as that Bill has passed through the Cape Legislature there will be no difficulty in their coming under the title of "Royal."

With regard to the point raised as to the dock at Simon's Bay, I will discuss it with the Hydrographer at the Admiralty and see what truth there may be in that allegation that the dock at Simon's Bay is not accessible in certain winds. I fancy there is some question of a breakwater to be added.

Dr. SMARTT : What I gather from seamen who know that coast is that in a howling south-easter, which very often blows for two or three days, the sweep of the wind playing on the entrance to the dock might make it unsafe for a battleship or cruiser to enter. I understand that that could be remedied by an expenditure of a not very large amount of money.

Lord TWEEDMOUTH : I believe there has been some additional breakwater contemplated.

Dr. SMARTT : I believe so.

Lord TWEEDMOUTH : I do not know the details of it, but I must get it from the Hydrographer.

Dr. JAMESON : Practically the extra expenditure necessary would be 50,000*l.* or 60,000*l.*

Dr. SMARTT : Say 60,000*l.* or 70,000*l.* to make it complete.

Lord TWEEDMOUTH : Then Sir Robert Bond referred to the Newfoundland Naval Reserve men. Your Chairman and I saw a squadron of them in this very quadrangle last summer, and we were struck by the smartness of the men, and we had a most excellent report of the service they do. We are very pleased to have the help of these men who are trained to the sea and who must be, and are, most efficient fellows, and of course we shall be glad to consider Sir Robert Bond's suggestion that there might be a possibility of some addition to these reservists.

The same remark that I made to Dr. Smartt applies to what Mr. Moor said about the Natal Naval corps. They have not been registered as naval volunteers. It would be necessary to have a Bill passed in the local legislature before that is done. At this moment I think from the reports I have received that the Natal Naval Corps is practically used as a sort of garrison artillery; that they do not at all train at sea; that they have some considerable guns under their charge—four 6-inch breech-loading guns, one 12-pounder quick-firing gun, two 45 Maxim guns, and two quick-firing Hotchkiss guns. In the last defence scheme, this body is to take charge of the guns in case of war or any attack as I understand. That I believe is the last arrangement under the Defence Committee.

I quite recognise that General Botha is in rather a different position from the other Prime Ministers, and, of course, the case of the Transvaal is quite different, in having no coast at all. Still, we shall welcome any help that General Botha may be able to give after consultation with his Government and his Parliament to the general Naval Defence of South Africa. I am sure anything of that sort would greatly help what, I hope, may very soon come about—the federation of all the different Colonies now existing in South Africa.