

Thirteenth Day.
8 May 1907.

NAVAL DEFENCE.
(Lord
Tweedmouth.)

Sir Joseph Ward asked what is the opinion of the Admiralty with regard to the comparative merits of submarine local defence, and subsidy. That, I think, is a question upon which we at the Admiralty cannot pretend to adjudicate. We say, if the Colonies decide on a system of local defence, we think submarines would be the most useful way of beginning it, and that Colonies would find that a submarine flotilla would be the best way from their point of view and from a strategical point of view of defending the coast, to begin with, at any rate. They might afterwards develop the destroyer, and so forth; but to begin with the submarine would be the best plan that could be adopted in everybody's interests.

We do not refuse the subsidy plan, and I do not think it would come well from us to say that we insist that the subsidies should be dropped. That, I think, is a matter for the Colonies themselves. So far as we are concerned the subsidy is a very convenient way of receiving help from the Colonies; but we quite recognise that it is a question for the Colonies themselves as to how far it is to be subsidy and how far it is to be local defence. What we really desire is that we should have the cordial help of the Colonies, and that in the most effective way in the first place, and in the second place, in a way most acceptable to the Colonies.

Dr. SMARTT : So that if the Colonies were prepared to accept a scheme which met with the approval of the Admiralty, to improve their local defence in such manner as not alone would it assist them but also the British Navy in time of emergency, they would have the approval of the Admiralty to devoting the subsidies that they now pay to the general fund, to this purpose, and still more have the approval of the Admiralty if they increased the amount of money to be devoted to those services. So long as we feel assured that that is the desire of the Admiralty, I am extremely anxious, as far as South Africa is concerned, to move forward in that direction.

Lord TWEEDMOUTH : We shall be willing to take in kind what has been paid in the past in hard cash.

Dr. SMARTT : And as times improve, we should be prepared to increase the amount devoted to these services. That is why I was anxious to know whether, so far as the Cape and Natal are concerned, the Admiralty would give us some suggestions as to the cost of building up either the submarines or destroyers—that is, the cost of the ship on the one hand, and the cost of the men on the other. We understand, in the case of a submarine, that we could not supplement her crew by the volunteers, because in that case you want really trained experts.

Lord TWEEDMOUTH : I have here a statement which I had made out for Sir Joseph Ward with regard to the cost of a submarine. Will you take that copy and share it with Mr. Moor? I gave a copy to Mr. Deakin. That gives, I think, a very good and short summary of what the cost of a submarine would be. You also would like something on the same lines as to a destroyer?

Dr. SMARTT : Yes. I would like even further than that some small scheme prepared by the Admiralty to put before the Cape and say : This is a scheme you can work up to whenever you can find the money. I want it as an incentive to the people to see what they are going to work up to, and to allow them to know what it will cost them.