

The PRESIDENT : Is that to be excluded from the jurisdiction of the proposed Imperial Council?

Mr. FISHER : It must be under those words.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : That, I believe, should be left entirely with the Governments of the respective portions of the Dominions, who should make their land forces efficient in every possible way.

The PRESIDENT : That would still be a local matter.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : It would still be a local matter, because my belief is that in the event of a war arising, upon the sea particularly, every portion of the British Dominions is concerned for the protection of each of the other portions of the Dominions, and as part and parcel of the scheme of defence in all parts of the British Empire will, I have no doubt, in their respective administrations carry out the requisite conditions for making effective land forces. The protection of the interior of the respective portions of the Dominions is not, from the point of view of co-operation, by any means so important as the all-important question of naval defence of the sea routes of the Empire with its difficulties in many respects much greater than those of the land defence system. For instance, I take it that the Commonwealth of Australia, or the Dominion of Canada, or the Union of South Africa, or New Zealand itself, will in their respective Governments carry out upon land that scheme which they believe to be best calculated to support and protect their respective possessions and to support the first line of defence—namely, the Empire British Navy.

In order to make the point clear, in New Zealand we will shortly be able to turn out 80,000 trained men in addition to those men who from time to time form part of the ordinary reserve forces—not in the strict sense of the term a reserve force, but men who, while following their ordinary avocations, have qualified themselves to take part for the purposes of effective land defence. We expect to have a mobile land force of fully 80,000 men very shortly, and we hope to have for overseas work a very considerable number—5,000 to 10,000 trained men—only to go outside of New Zealand voluntarily. So that from the point of view of protection of our own country, we ought to be able to make it impossible for a foreign foe, if one should ever attempt it, to land on our shores.

That is one of the matters we are able to carry out without the co-operation of any other portion of the British Dominions or of the British Empire. But we are not able to do more than give our support in such a way as we think best in the matter of the Empire Navy; we are only able to do our individual part, and we may at any time under the present system, as I have already said, be drawn into war or certainly the results of the war without consultation, without our people having a voice in it, whether we like it or not. We are immediately concerned in the results of any war upon the sea that may take place between Great Britain and any other country; we are concerned just as much as Great Britain is, although our interests are not as great. So, in my opinion, is every other portion of the British Empire; and it is with the object of co-ordination and co-operation and having a voice, even although in a minority, upon an Imperial Council of State, that I have ventured to put forward this resolution. It is with the object of allowing our people in our countries, who recognise their responsibilities and are prepared to accept them under existing conditions, to have some representation upon the Imperial Council. It is from the point of view of our people having no voice at present and there being no representative body appointed which can voice the sentiments of the Government of the day or of the people of New Zealand, that I am urging that it is necessary that we should effect some change as against the present system, which has done very well up to now, but which with the evolution, with the growth, and with the development that is going on in various portions of the British Empire, does not, in my opinion, meet the present position as it should do.