

DEFENCE.

Owing to the amendment made last year in the defence legislation, detention in military custody has been substituted for imprisonment. The Act of last year needs further amendment, and the Government has submitted this question with others affecting the national defence scheme to a joint Committee of both Houses of the Legislature for consideration and report.

A full statement of the position of the Military Forces of this Dominion will be found in the Defence Report. The officers, non-commissioned officers, and men comprising our citizen army have, with few exceptions, proved amenable to discipline, and the spirit in which they have entered into their respective duties is a matter for congratulation.

NAVAL POLICY.

The second meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence, which I had the privilege to attend, was held seven days before my leaving London. Prior to this, several conferences had taken place with the Admiralty, the results of which were considered at the above-mentioned meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence. Some important details remained to be considered, and these, owing to my departure for New Zealand, became matters of correspondence. So soon as these details are settled, the Government will submit to Parliament a policy which will recognize to the full the necessity for one control for Imperial purposes, will throw upon the New Zealand Parliament a more direct responsibility for naval defence, and will give the people of this Dominion a more definite interest in defence matters and afford them a better opportunity for service.

EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

In organizing the defence of the Empire the War Office found it necessary to ascertain the probable number and nature of the forces which the oversea Dominions might be able to supply. To enable this question to be answered by New Zealand, it is proposed to provide the machinery for an expeditionary force. It is not intended to bring into existence a force for service outside New Zealand; this can only be done by the men volunteering to serve when the time comes. It is necessary, however, in order to give an answer to the War Office, to decide upon the number of men and the nature of the force; also to provide the arms and equipment, and to have everything ready for those in the Territorial Force who may offer their services. From past experience there can be no doubt that if the necessity arises there will be no lack of volunteers to respond to the call.

AVIATION.

It is with pleasure I have to announce that the Imperial Air Fleet Committee has presented the New Zealand Government with a Bleriot monoplane. Mr. Gustav Hamel made a successful flight from London to Cologne in the machine. An officer of the New Zealand Staff Corps is in England undergoing a course of aviation, while in the Dominion there are several officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of the Defence Department with a knowledge of mechanics who are qualifying to undergo a course of training under proper supervision with a view to becoming proficient in the same art.

BATTLESHIP "NEW ZEALAND."

I am now in a position to announce that the actual cost of the battleship presented to the Imperial Navy amounted to £1,701,000, and that the final payment has been made in London. In accordance with the provisions of the Naval Defence Act, 1909, the sum of £50,000, being sinking fund at the rate of 4 per cent., was paid over during the year, making a total of £102,028 now in the hands of the Public Trustee towards the repayment of the loan. The sinking fund will be sufficient to repay the loan in about seventeen years.