

New Zealand and Naval Defence

By

The Hon. Sir James Allen GCMG, KCB

A Paper read before the Otago Branch of the New Zealand Historical Association on September 16, 1929 and before the Wellington Branch on October 2, 1929.

The story of the New Zealand Navy cannot be recorded as it should be without reference to the action of the British Admiralty, which led to British occupation of New Zealand.

Recently the secret orders issued to Lieutenant James Cook in 1768 have been brought to light, and comments on them have been made by Professor Rose at a special meeting of the Royal Geographical Society. Reference was made in these orders to a Continent supposed to exist in the South Pacific, and Cook was instructed to put to sea with the bark he commanded as soon as the observation of the transit of Venus should be finished, and then follow his instructions should he discover the Continent. Professor Rose says, "The secret instructions were intended to break down the Spanish claim to control the Pacific, the observation of the transit of Venus at Tahiti being a mere 'blind.' "

Cook in doing what he did laid the foundation of British power, both in the south-western and north-eastern parts of the Pacific. His discovery of the East Coast of New Zealand took place on the 6th October, 1769, and he took possession in the name of the King on the 15th November, 1769. It is interesting to note that a Frenchman, De Surville, sighted New Zealand on the 12th December and went on shore on the 18th December, 1769. Du Clesmeur (a French navigator) in his journal records that he left the coast of New Zealand on the 4th July, 1772, after having taken possession of the Country for the King under the name "Austral France."§

The Admiralty connection with New Zealand continued as the first three Governors were Naval officers, namely:—Captain Hobson, 1840 to September, 1842, Lieutenant Shortland (acting), September, 1842 to December, 1843, Captain Fitzroy from 1843 to 1845, and it was in 1840, not long after Captain Hobson's arrival, that he issued instructions to Captain Stanley of H.M.S. *Britomart* to proceed to Akaroa, where he arrived and hoisted the flag before the arrival of the French frigate *L' Aube*.

Time will not permit me to follow the movements of Admiralty vessels in these early days of New Zealand, and I must pass on to say a few words about the period of the Maori Wars, and the "First New Zealand Navy," as it has been termed by Herbert Baillie in a paper read before the Wellington Philosophical Society, October, 1919.

THE FIRST NEW ZEALAND NAVY.

As far back as 1846 the Colony possessed a gunboat purchased for Porirua Harbour at a cost of £100 17s. 11d., and Baillie states that in 1864 New Zealand had quite an imposing fleet manned from ships of the British Navy then on the station. A memo from the Minister of Defence on the 20th October, 1863, gives us some idea of the position: "But so strongly has the necessity been felt for providing means for commanding the navigation of this important artery of the country and for preparing means of communication with the military settlers, to be located in the Waikato Country and for transporting the necessary supplies, that two smaller steamboats of very light draft have been ordered in Sydney." Baillie concluded his address with these words: "It is to be hoped that the *Calliope's* gunboat, the schooner *Caroline*, the paddle steamers *Avon* and *Sandfly* and the river steamers *Pioneer*, *Koheroa* and *Rangiriri*, and the men of the British Navy who manned them, will not be forgotten in our histories."

THE FIRST NAVAL AGREEMENTS.

In 1879, due to the changes resulting from the Franco-Prussian War, a Royal Commission was appointed to enquire into the defence of British possessions and commerce abroad. Sir Charles Lucas speaks of this as the beginning of a scheme for systematic defence. Six years later, in 1885, on account of the alarm of war, a standing "Colonial Defence Committee" was established, known later as "The Overseas Defence Committee."

The first Colonial Conference was held in 1887 when defence was considered as the most important "common interest" and "common responsibility" of the Mother Country and daughter states. By the Australasian Defence Act 1887 provision was made for the payment by the Colony of New Zealand of approximately £20,000 per annum for ten years as part of the cost of an additional Naval force to be employed for the protection of floating trade. Another Colonial Conference was held in 1902, and the following year the Australian and New Zealand Naval Defence Act was passed, which increased the contribution to £40,000 per annum.

The Committee of Imperial Defence, through the medium of which it was hoped that the co-ordination of the defence forces of the Empire would be solved, came into existence in 1904. Allusion will later be made to the influence of this Committee in solving the question of New Zealand Naval Policy in 1913.

The fifth Colonial Conference met in 1907. The name was altered to "Imperial Conference," and it was notable because of a resolution which established the Dominions as national entities distinct from the British Isles. In the following year, by the Naval Subsidy Act 1908, the annual contribution from New Zealand was increased to £100,000 per annum for ten years from the 12th May, 1909.

The acceleration of the German Naval programme no doubt influenced those who attended the second "Imperial Conference" in 1909. An Admiralty memorandum dated the 20th July, 1909 formed the basis of the preliminary Conferences. This Memorandum stated that the main duty of the Conference as regards Naval Defence would be to determine the form in which the various Dominion Governments could best participate in the burden of Imperial Defence with due regard to political and geographical conditions. The proposal was to establish a Pacific Fleet to consist of three units, in the East Indies, Australia and China Seas, each comprising a large armoured cruiser of the new Indomitable type, three second-class cruisers of the Bristol type, six destroyers of the River class, and three submarines of "C" class.

CONTRIBUTIONS OR LOCAL NAVIES.

Alternative methods which might be adopted by the Dominion Governments were discussed. Australia decided to lay the foundation of a fleet of their own, and became responsible for the Australian Unit of the Pacific Fleet. New Zealand preferred to adhere to the policy of contribution to the Royal Navy, whatever was provided being applied towards the maintenance of the China Unit of the Pacific Fleet.

In March, 1909, the battle-cruiser New Zealand was presented by New Zealand to the British Government, and it was arranged that she was to be the flagship of the China Unit, and 'that a portion of the Unit, consisting of two Bristol Cruisers, three destroyers and two submarines should, in peace time, be stationed in New Zealand waters, the ships to be manned as far as possible by New Zealand officers and men. The Commonwealth of Australia not only completed the Australian Unit, but also relieved the Mother Country of a payment of £250,000 per annum promised by Great Britain.

The Naval Defence Act of 1909 authorised the borrowing of £2,000,000 to pay for the battle-cruiser New Zealand, and established a special sinking fund of 4 per cent, per annum for the payment of the loan. The New Zealand was scrapped as the result of the Washington Conference. The sinking fund of 4 per cent, which, had it continued to exist and accumulate, and had it earned 5 per cent per annum, would have paid off the debt in the year 1928-29 was diverted in 1925-26 to form part of the capital funds under the repayment of the Public Debt Act 1925. The total debt at the 31st March, 1929 outstanding was £1,477,016, and the annual charges thereon £89,243.

Owing to the rapid increase of the German Fleet, the arrangements agreed upon at the 1909 Conference for the creation by Great Britain of the China and East Indies Units were abandoned, and in consequence, the Pacific Fleet of the 1909 Conference never materialised. From 1909 to 1912 the Imperial Government maintained in the South Pacific the Australian Squadron, but with the completion by the Commonwealth of Australia of its portion of the proposed Pacific Fleet, the Australasian Squadron was withdrawn and the ships were sent to England or to the New Zealand Station, which up till then had been part of the Australian Station. The ships attached to the New Zealand Station as from October, 1913, were H.M.S. Psyche, Pyramus, and Torch.

NEW ZEALAND'S NEW POLICY.

The Reform Government, in which I was Minister of Defence, came into office in July, 1912. The Prime Minister and the Cabinet considered it advisable that I should pay a visit to London, partly on account of financial arrangements there, and as Defence Minister I was commissioned to interview the Imperial Authorities to endeavour to bring about a more satisfactory state of affairs so far as New Zealand Naval Defence was concerned. Opportunity was taken on the way, to interview the Commonwealth Prime Minister (Mr. Fisher) and the Defence Minister (Mr. Pearce) in Melbourne. At these Conferences co-operation in Naval Defence was discussed, and it was made clear that New Zealand desired in case of war, or if war were imminent, that control of any fleet units should pass to the Admiralty. On my arrival in England, and after some preliminary discussions, the British Prime Minister (the Rt. Hon. H. H. Asquith) did me the honour to invite me to attend a meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence. At this meeting, on the 6th February, 1913, it was decided that I should discuss the Naval Policy of New Zealand with the Admiralty and that the results of our deliberations should be reported to a subsequent meeting of the Committee.

In my report to the Right Hon. W. F. Massey, on my return to New Zealand, I wrote:

Several Conferences were held with the First Lord, the First Sea Lord and other representatives of the Admiralty. Much advice was given me at these Conferences and was so often repeated, that it seemed to savour more of influence than of advice. Notwithstanding all that was urged, I came away from the meetings without any material change in my opinions, and realising that my ideas as to New Zealand's Naval Policy in the Pacific were not in accord with those of the Admiralty.

From the first it was evident that the First Lord held opinions as to the attitude New Zealand should adopt which differed from mine. These differences may perhaps be best explained by quoting from the correspondence:—

On the 14th February, 1913, the Right Hon. Mr. Churchill wrote: "The Admiralty cannot hesitate at all in expressing their strong preference for the method of Naval assistance which has been adopted in the past by New Zealand." The question was frequently discussed, and on the 18th March, 1913, I wrote to Mr. Churchill:

"The principles which guide me are:—

(a) The utilisation of New Zealand national sentiment and local patriotism, to give our people that interest in Naval Defence, which in my opinion would not be forthcoming by the payment of a subsidy to Great Britain, to use as Great Britain desires.

(b) Sound strategy: In this I include some provision for advice to Australia and New Zealand, which would so direct their efforts in acquiring or constructing ships of war that the unit of one would fit in with the Unit of the other, and that the units of both would fit in with any Imperial squadron when concentration took place. This would avoid waste. Further, I include in sound strategy a definite understanding that all units in the Southern Pacific, including the British Unit in China Waters, should concentrate for manoeuvre purposes in peace time; and that they should all be at the disposal of the Admiralty in case of war or if war were imminent."

As we were unable to come to an agreement, the question was referred to the Committee of Imperial Defence, which was summoned by the Prime Minister (Mr. Asquith) for the 11th April, 1913. There were over twenty members present including:—Rt. Hon. Mr. Asquith, Prime Minister (in the chair), Rt. Hon. L. Harcourt (Secretary of State for the Colonies), Rt. Hon. W. S. Churchill (First Lord of the Admiralty), Admiral H.S.H. Prince Louis of Battenberg (First Sea Lord), Vice-

Admiral Sir John Jellicoe (Second Sea Lord), Rt. Hon. Viscount Haldane (Lord Chancellor), Rt. Hon. R. McKenna (Secretary of State for Home Affairs), Most Hon. the Marquess of Crewe (Secretary of State for India), General Sir John French (Chief of the Imperial General Staff), Brigadier-General H. H. Wilson (Director of Military Operations), Viscount Esher, and Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher.

It was reported to the Committee that the Admiralty and I approached the question from different points of view, and that although the ground had been gone over very often, no great advance had been made towards reconciling divergence. After the position had been represented to the Committee, the Prime Minister said that it would be material to the discussion to quote the agreement arrived at by Mr. McKenna in the case of Australia at the Defence Conference of 1909, which was as follows:

Their vessels should be manned as far as possible by Australian officers and seamen, and the numbers required to make up the full complement for immediate purposes should be sent by the Royal Navy. In peace and while on the Australian station this fleet unit would be under the exclusive control of the Commonwealth Government, as regards their movements and general administration, but officers and men should be governed by regulations similar to the King's Regulations, and be under Naval discipline, and when with vessels of the Royal Navy the Senior Officer should take command of the whole.

On this basis the matter was settled, and it is right to say that subsequently Mr. Churchill did everything possible to arrange details in a satisfactory way.

The result of subsequent conferences and correspondence may be best gathered from my report, dated the 3rd June, 1913, to Mr. Massey, Prime Minister of New Zealand:

"It is necessary to advise you that the battleship cruiser New Zealand is reckoned by the Admiralty in their list of ships; is not supplemental to the ordinary British naval programme and consequently does not represent an additional margin of safety. On the other hand the Australian battleship is not reckoned on the Admiralty list and is supplemental to the ordinary British programme. The result of the differing policies as adopted by the Commonwealth and New Zealand in the past, as thus disclosed, is significant. In the one case Australia has created something material from the point of view of an Empire Fleet; on the other hand New Zealand has relieved the British taxpayers of the expense of building a ship which, failing New Zealand's gift, he would have had to provide himself.

"The ability or otherwise of the Mother Country to create and maintain a fleet sufficiently powerful to leave no doubt as to sea supremacy in such decisive areas as the North Sea and the Mediterranean would so materially affect New Zealand policy that I felt bound to ask the question. The reply given by Mr. Asquith was that the Mother Country was able to do this.

"Notwithstanding the altered conditions and the increasing competition in warship building, there can be no doubt that Great Britain has kept well ahead in her Home waters, but the necessity for concentration and the growth of foreign navies has left other seas with less protection than was the case of old. For these reasons the Mother Country has found it necessary to resort to the Alliance and the Entente Cordiale. Whilst either or both of these policies may be sound and desirable, still, if too much reliance is placed on them, there may occur some sacrifice of Australian and New Zealand interests."

My report suggests the gradual evolving of an "Eastern Fleet of Empire" composed of local units from the Mother Country, Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand.

By "local Units" I mean such Units as each country, in its own opinion, ought, and can afford, to contribute for its own harbour and coast defence, and for the purpose of a common sea-going, fighting force. By "Eastern Fleet of Empire" I understand a combination of the sea-going fighting portions of each Unit, having as its main objective the protection of the sea ways of the Pacific, and of sufficient power to support the Advisors of the Sovereign in any diplomatic questions, and especially those in which the various Dominions in the Pacific may be interested. It should be supplemental to the British Fleet; should not be moved from the Pacific except for the most urgent reasons, but must be at the disposal of the advisors of the Sovereign when war broke out or if war were imminent. Whilst the British Cabinet advise the Sovereign, the control for war purposes must be with them, but it is not difficult to conceive, that in the not distant future, the Advisors of the Sovereign for defence purposes will be a more widely representative body.

PROPOSED ACTION BY NEW ZEALAND.

The proposals made by me for consideration by the Cabinet were:—

That legislation be passed giving the New Zealand Government power to raise and maintain a permanent Naval Force, to provide for the application to the New Zealand Naval Force of the Naval Discipline Act and the Admiralty Instructions.

That the offer of the Admiralty to lend us a ship for the training of personnel, an officer to command this ship and supervise the training, the necessary staff, both officers and men, to complete the training staff and establishment, be accepted.

The Admiralty had agreed to station in New Zealand waters two cruisers and to lend us an experienced officer to advise the New Zealand Government. My proposals were that the training of officers be carried out either at the Australian Naval College or at Osborne; that New Zealand do not at the present time acquire ships of her own, but that it be part of our future policy to acquire such as we might be advised were suitable for our requirements, taking into consideration co-operation with the Mother Country, Australia, and any other Dominion that may come into the arrangement. It was also proposed that as any unit we could hope to create in the near future would not provide scope for a career for officers, etc., the British Government be asked to agree to the proposal made by me in a letter to Mr. Churchill on the 24th April, 1913, to the effect that the Royal Navy should be available for service by and promotion of New Zealand officers and men. It was recommended that the £100,000 per annum then paid by New Zealand be increased to £150,000, part to be used to pay all expenses of our training ship, and the balance to be set aside to meet the costs of the two cruisers to be stationed in New Zealand waters.

During the session of Parliament in 1913 the Naval Defence Act was passed, and this authorised the raising of permanent Naval forces on the basis of voluntary enlistment from under the age of 21 years. An amendment in the Naval Defence Act of 1922 prescribes the service—"not exceeding in the case of a person under the age of 18 years the period required for him to attain the age of 30 years, and not exceeding in any other case a period of 12 years." On discharge a member of the Naval Forces was to be drafted into the New Zealand Royal Naval Reserve, for service only in time of war. Provision was made in the Act that in time of war, or if war were imminent, the New Zealand Defence Forces should pass to the control of the Government of Great Britain.

A Naval Adviser, Captain P. H. Hall-Thompson, R.N., arrived in New Zealand in June, 1914. H.M.S. *Philomel* was commissioned on the 15th July, 1914, and arrangements were made for the training of New Zealand boys, it being proposed to enter 60 or 70 to complete the full complement of the ship. The New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy by these actions became inaugurated in the year 1914.

NEW ZEALAND AND THE WAR.

On the night of the 30th July, 1914, a message was received from the Admiralty indicating that war appeared imminent, and all ideas of the training scheme had to be at once abandoned. The *Philomel* left New Zealand waters on the 16th October, 1914, on convoy duty, with the first Expeditionary Force, and did not return until the 16th March, 1917. On the 15th August, 1914, nine days after the receipt of a telegram informing the Government that New Zealand would render a "great and urgent Imperial service in seizing the German wireless station at Samoa," 1,413 rank and file, fully equipped, embarked. The Force landed on the 29th August and the British flag was formally hoisted. The main body sailed on the 16th October under the protection of H.I.J.M.S. *Ibuki*, H.M.S. *Minotaur* and three light cruisers.

The provision of transports for reinforcements and their protection does not come within the scope of this paper; but there was one other naval service which New Zealand was able to render during the War. In 1916 three officers of the British branch of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve arrived in New Zealand to recruit 100 officers and 75 ratings. Before the end of the year these had volunteered and were despatched to England. They were required for auxiliary patrol duties round about Great Britain. Some served on motor launches, doing escort duty, patrolling and

hydrophone patrols in connection with submarine defence. Other officers were drafted to trawlers and drifters, and others with technical knowledge served at the Admiralty, doing various scientific duties. On the coming into operation of the coastal motor boat, officers were drafted to these craft, which were used for torpedo duties.

ADMIRAL JELlicOE'S REPORT.

The development of the Naval Policy of New Zealand, which had been interrupted by the outbreak of the War in August, 1914, was a matter of grave thought for the Government when the War came to an end in 1918. The anxiety with regard to the transports with troops to occupy Western Samoa when the arrangements for naval protection at a rendezvous were not carried out; the almost greater anxiety concerning some of the transports conveying a portion of the Main Body and their recall because of inadequate protection in view of German warships at large in the Pacific; the subsequent dangers and loss of life and property at sea, and the losses through minefields laid by the raider Wolf without our knowledge at the North Cape and at the western entrance to Cook Strait; the sinking of the S.S. Wimmera on the 26th June, 1918, on the former, and the blowing up of the Port Kembla on the 18th September, 1917, on the latter, could not be forgotten. An official inquiry was held about the loss of the Port Kembla, and the Court having at the time no suspicion of a minefield expressed the opinion that the explosion was due to the placing of a quantity of high explosive substance in the after hold, and that such act was deliberate and done with the intention of destroying the vessel and her crew. An enemy mine-field having since been discovered, in all probability the loss of the vessel was caused by her striking a mine.

It was felt that a report ought to be secured to enable the Government to proceed with naval policy on sound lines, consequently a request was submitted to the British Government with the result that the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty issued instructions to Viscount Jellicoe to proceed to New Zealand. He was asked to advise whether in the light of the experience of the War, the scheme of naval organisation which had been adopted or might be in contemplation required reconsideration. Viscount Jellicoe arrived at Wellington in H.M.S. New Zealand on the 20th August, 1919, and presented his report on the 3rd October, 1919. One part of the report was published, and can be found in the appendices of the House of Representatives.

Viscount Jellicoe adopted the principle that

"responsibilities in the matter of naval defence are far more clearly recognised and far more cheerfully shouldered if the result of the effort made is apparent to those making it; in other words, if the ships provided are seen by the people who pay for them, and are manned as far as possible by their own kith and kin."

(It is interesting to note that Viscount Jellicoe was present at the meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence in 1913 when it was arranged that the contribution by New Zealand to the Royal Navy should give place to a new policy, by which New Zealand was to create itself and maintain a New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy.) There was no reason, he said, "Why the vessels should not be part and parcel of the Royal Navy, the ships of the same type, the personnel actuated by the same motives, trained on the same lines, imbued with the same traditions, governed by a practically common discipline and aiming at the same high standard of efficiency."

The report made it clear that the proper strategy for the British Empire in the Pacific was to provide an adequate Fleet in the Far East and to defend Singapore and Hong Kong against attack by capital ships supported by a strong landing force. New Zealand was reminded of the possible escape of raiders from a blockaded area and the necessity to keep sufficient naval force to protect trade and to ensure the early capture or destruction of such enemy vessels as may escape the main blockade, with the object of interrupting our overseas communications by gun fire, torpedoes, mines or aircraft. The report recalled the difficulties connected with transports, and the necessity which arose during the War for a large number of men-of-war abroad being used for convoy work, as experience had shown that transports and trade are best protected against attack by means of a convoy system.*

Viscount Jellicoe gives in detail the fleet which he considers Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand should provide in the near future in the Far East. This part of Viscount Jellicoe's report was not published as a Parliamentary paper in New Zealand. The New Zealand portion of the Fleet was to consist of three light cruisers, six submarines, one submarine parent ship, and a naval air school. The vessels required for harbour defences are not included in the above list, but New Zealand was to provide these. The ships and personnel of the New Zealand Division he assumed would be lent by the United Kingdom, commencing in 1920 with one light cruiser, other vessels being gradually added until the Division had reached its complete strength in 1926. As the vessels become obsolete they should be replaced at the cost of the New Zealand Government.

The provision of the necessary vessels for harbour defences and local arrangements for harbour defence were dealt with in considerable detail, and one section was devoted to mine sweeping. It was recommended that two trawlers should be built or acquired by the New Zealand Government and should be used for training the reserve in time of peace, and that a reserve of mine-sweeping vessels could be established by encouraging the fishing industry, f With regard to docks, Viscount Jellicoe was of opinion that "existing commercial facilities will meet naval needs for some years to come."

The Naval Air requirements in New Zealand were reported on in some detail and we were reminded that "air units now form an integral part of any fleet and it is important that flying for naval purposes should be developed as rapidly as financial considerations admit." Realising the necessity for economy, the proposal made was "that a small naval flying school should be provided at Auckland."

The necessity for supplies of fuel and the importance of the Westport mines at Granity and Denniston were stressed, and detailed recommendations were made including the erection of two 6000 ton oil tanks, one at Calliope Dock, Auckland, and the other at Wellington. It was pointed out that the Navy would probably contain no coal-burning ships in 15 years time, and that a reserve of oil should be established without delay. Estimates of cost, including maintenance, administration, training, provision and storage of fuel reserves, wireless, harbour defence, naval air school, are given in Jellicoe's report (printed in the appendices of the House of Representatives). The 1919 table starts with a proposed expenditure of £357,100 in 1920-21, rising to £1,166,100 in 1925-26; the 1920 table, starting with £539,800 in 1920-21, rising to £1,051,450 in 1925-26; both including the necessary sum to provide for depreciation. The payments for the battle cruiser New Zealand yet to be made are not included in these figures.

Viscount Jellicoe's proposals were based on the general principle that New Zealand should pay for the manning and maintenance of its Division, and provide such portions of the personnel of the ships as was practicable. New Zealand officers were to serve the major proportion of their earlier career in the ships maintained by New Zealand, but would be liable for service in any ship of the Royal Navy. Petty officers and men were to be liable for service in all ships of the Far Eastern Fleet. In order to provide for the entry of New Zealanders as officers of the Royal Navy it was proposed that entry and training should be through Osborne and Dartmouth or through the Australian Naval College. For petty officers and men the proposal was entry as boys between the ages of 15 and 16^{1/2} in the training ship *Philomel*.

The establishment of a New Zealand Division of the Royal Naval Reserve was recommended; to be drawn from the mercantile marine, including the fishing industry; direct from the shores as volunteers in lieu of military training; from the training ship on discharge.

CONTROL OF THE NEW ZEALAND NAVY.

It was recommended that the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy should be administered by a Naval Board consisting of the Minister of Defence and the Chief of the Naval Staff, the latter being a Commodore. In case of the Chief of Staff disagreeing with the action about to be taken by the Minister, it was proposed that he be empowered to present a statement to the Prime Minister.

Viscount Jellicoe, with the experience of the late War before him, formed the conclusion that in war time the Far Eastern Fleet should be directed by a flag officer of high rank located at Singapore and assisted by a strong staff, and he emphasised the necessity of placing the whole fleet of the Empire, in case of war, under the single control of the British Admiralty.

In the addendum published in B-6, 1920, the following action was recommended:—

1. Establish Navy Board Administration.
2. Organise and commence recruiting.
3. Philomel to be fitted out and commissioned as a training ship.
4. Acquire from the Admiralty a coal-burning light cruiser having a main armament comprising 6-inch guns only.

In 1919 a Committee consisting of Major-General Sir A. W. Robin (President), Major-General Sir A. H. Russell, General George S. Richardson, and Commander T. A. Williams, R.N., was set up to consider the proposals outlined in Viscount Jellicoe's report. In the letter covering the report of the Committee the members urged the necessity for the immediate setting up of a Dominion Committee of Defence with the object of co-ordinating the Naval, Air and Land Forces. The report itself states that the first and most vital essential for the defence of the Empire is a strong Navy. It recommends the Government to decide on the amount of money it proposes to allocate for Naval, Land and Air Defence. In the absence of this information the Committee summarised the proposals and suggested the necessary steps to give effect to them. The Committee recommended that existing flying schools be subsidised, and private enterprise assisted to develop commercial and postal services, thus ensuring the availability of our requirements for war.

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS AND WASHINGTON CONFERENCE.

In 1920 I resigned my portfolio as Minister of Defence in order to proceed to London to take over the office of High Commissioner. Towards the end of that year the first meeting of the Assembly of the League of Nations took place at Geneva, and from then, until my term of office closed in 1926, I attended every meeting of the Assembly and came into contact with representative men from many nations who were endeavouring to carry out the purposes of the League, to secure peace throughout the world. What the result may be cannot be predicted, except that it seems safe to say that the contacts which take place at Geneva are undoubtedly having an effect which must lead to better understanding.

Viscount Jellicoe recognised the importance of the League in this respect in his report when he wrote: "The effect of the League of Nations and its influence on the question of the limitation of armaments cannot be ignored," and further "decisions reached may be affected by the formation of the League of Nations."

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE.

That the desire for the "limitation," or perhaps one may better say the "reduction," of armaments was not confined to the League of Nations is evident from the Summoning by the United States of America of the Conference at Washington in November, 1921. As a result of this Conference Great Britain abandoned its supremacy as a Naval Power, and an agreement was reached that the total "capital ship" tonnage should not exceed in the case of the United States and the British Empire 525,000 tons each; for France and Italy 175,000 tons each, and for Japan 315,000 tons, generally spoken of as the 5-5-3 ratio. The total tonnage of aircraft-carriers of each of the contracting Powers was also fixed. The "capital ship" in the case of vessels hereafter to be built was defined as a vessel of war whose displacement exceeds 10,000 tons. No agreement was arrived at for the limitation of the number of auxiliary cruisers, destroyers and submarines, except that auxiliary cruisers should not exceed 10,000 tons or be armed with larger than 8-inch guns.

Under Article XIX of the Treaty it was agreed by the United States, the British Empire and Japan, that the status quo should be maintained with regard to certain fortifications and naval bases in the Pacific. So far as the British Empire is concerned the agreement referred to Hong Kong and insular possessions east of the meridian of 110 deg. east longitude (which excludes Singapore) and excepted possessions adjacent to the coast of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia and its territories and New Zealand. The Treaty was to remain in force till the 31st December, 1936. It was signed at Washington on the 6th February, 1922, as between the United States of America, the British Empire, France, Italy and Japan, and it should be noted the expression "British Empire" means that the Naval armaments of the United Kingdom and of each of the Dominions, added together, are taken as the basis of comparison with the naval armaments of other Powers. In my judgment, especially in view of the prospective growth of the Dominions and their geographical position, the basis of comparison was not just. This was represented to a committee which sat in London presided over by Lord Robert Cecil as preparatory to a Conference at Geneva, (which I was privileged to attend), and a recommendation was submitted to my fellow High Commissioners in London that at the Imperial Conference in 1926 there should be a proposal that the "United Kingdom" should be considered the unit for comparison instead of the "British Empire."

An Imperial Conference was held in 1923, at which adequate defence of the British Empire was again discussed, and amongst other items, suggestions were made for the provision of Naval bases, facilities for repair and fuel; maintenance of the minimum standard of naval defence, the Washington Treaty and Air Forces.

In October, 1920, H.M.S. Chatham, which was loaned to New Zealand, was commissioned with officers and men of the Royal Navy for a period of three years. On the 1st March, 1921, the Philomel was commissioned as a training and depot ship. The Chatham was replaced by H.M.S. Dunedin in 1924, and during that year the oil-carrying ship Nucula arrived on loan to the New Zealand Government. In October, 1925, H.M.S. Diomedé was commissioned as a second cruiser in the New Zealand Division and the trawler Wakakura arrived in 1926. Another Imperial Conference met in 1926, at which a resolution was passed calling attention to the necessity of a naval base at Singapore to ensure "the security of the world-wide trade routes upon which the safety and welfare of all parts of the Empire depend."

On the 23rd of April, 1927, the Prime Minister (Rt. Hon. J. G. Coates) made a statement on Singapore and Naval Defence which is printed as A 7, Appendices 1927. The Prime Minister announced that the Government had decided to provide £1,000,000 for Singapore, to be paid in eight equal annual instalments, and further that a third D class cruiser would not be maintained, but that when it became necessary to withdraw the existing cruisers, they would be replaced by two B class cruisers. The D class cruisers are 4,850 tons and the B class approximately 8,000 tons. He further stated that pending the arrival of the B class cruisers, alterations in the equipment and plant of the New Zealand Naval base would be undertaken.

Before leaving the question of Singapore, it is well to draw your attention to an article in the American "Foreign Affairs" of January, 1929, on "The Strategy of Singapore," by Nicholas Roosevelt, of the editorial staff of the New York "Times." After remarking that Singapore stands on not only the principal trade route from Europe to Eastern Asia, but also the line of communication that ties the Dominions in the Pacific to India and the rest of the Empire, Roosevelt states: "The Americans in the Philippines look with just as friendly an eye on the Singapore Base as do the Dutch because they, too, care only about the preservation of the status quo in the Pacific."

THE PRESENT POSITION.

The present position, September, 1929, is as follows: The ships on the New Zealand Station consist of:—

Dunedin and Diomedé on loan from the British Government and maintained by the New Zealand Government.

Laburnum and Veronica owned and maintained by the British Government.

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary *Nucula*, oil ship, on loan from the British Government and maintained by New Zealand.

The *Philomel*, depot ship and training establishment, owned and maintained by New Zealand, and the *Wakakura*, tender to the *Philomel*, also owned and maintained by New Zealand.

The ships are manned partly by Imperial ratings and partly by New Zealanders. The report on the New Zealand Naval Forces for 1929 states there are at present 405 active service ratings who have been recruited in New Zealand serving in the New Zealand Division; that during the year 27 ratings of various classes have been sent to England for specialist courses, followed in most cases by a period of seagoing training in battleships of the Fleet. The report indicates that there are 826 officers and men in the New Zealand Royal Naval Reserve, which consists of:—

Class A.—Ex-Naval ratings.

Class B.—Men who have followed the sea for at least one year.

Class C.—Men who have not followed the sea.

Class D.—Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, that is men of 18 to 25 years of age who do their training at the R.N.V.R. Headquarters every week instead of undergoing territorial training, and also embark on one of H.M. ships for seven days each year. In future they will do extra training on the *Wakakura*.

In four years the number in the D class has risen from nil to 420.

The Naval Board, which has been functioning since 1921, consists at this time of: The Minister of Defence, First Naval Member (Commodore Geoffrey Blake, C.B., D.S.O., R.N.), dealing with operations, staff business, Naval policy and maritime warfare; Second Naval Member (Captain John S. G. Fraser, D.S.O., R.N.), dealing with personnel and material.

The New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy is therefore a thing in being, and provision has been made by Act of our Parliament for Great Britain to take control in case of war.

It is not proposed in this address to deal with the problem of co-ordination between Army, Navy and Air Force in the Mother Country, in New Zealand, or in any of the other Dominions. As already pointed out, the Committee which dealt with Viscount Jellicoe's report did recommend the establishment of a "Dominion Committee of Defence." If the machinery of Imperial Defence is to be built up in the most efficient manner, and if, when the occasion arises, there shall be in existence some Imperial organisation, which the Mother Country and the Dominions can trust and can use to the very best advantage, then it seems essential to apply our thoughts now to the kind of organisation required.

Before leaving England in 1913, I did venture to suggest to the Rt. Hon. Mr. Asquith and to Mr. Churchill, "an organisation to advise each Dominion on the class of ships to acquire, on Imperial necessities in the Pacific, and to provide for concentration manoeuvres in peace time; the organisation to consist of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence and one or more representatives of the British Government or the Admiralty," and I thought it might possibly be considered as a Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence. Mr. Asquith replied, "I am very glad to receive the suggestions you make in your letter and will give them very careful consideration, but you will, I feel sure, realise that the proposal for an advisory organisation is one which will require mature deliberation and discussion before any conclusion is come to."

You will remember that necessity brought about during the War the creation of the "Imperial War Cabinet," of which the Prime Ministers of the Dominions and representatives of India were members.

The War Cabinet report for the year 1917 uses these words:—

The necessities of the War have thus brought into being a body representative of all parts of the Empire able to deliberate and to come to decisions on questions affecting the day-to-day conduct of the War as well as on the larger issues of Imperial policy, without impairing the autonomy of the units of which the Empire is composed.

What has just been said indicates one of the problems which should be dealt with in the near future, but there is another, of a different type, which arises out of the growing desire to reduce armaments and to bring about peace throughout the world. To me reduction in armaments is a minor question when compared with the supreme issue of securing peace. If this latter can be won then the armaments problem is solved. We may well rejoice that there are in existence at least two covenants, that of the League of Nations and the Briand-Kellogg Pact, which make for peace. The Pact consists of three Articles: The first condemns recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, and renounces war as an instrument of National Policy. The Covenant of the League contains similar provisions. Article 2 of the Pact provides for the solution of all disputes or conflicts by pacific means, and so does the Covenant of the League, though it does recognise, in Article 15, the possibility of a dispute which may not be submitted to arbitration, and may not be settled even on reference to the Council.

The Pact has not been agreed to without interpretative declarations. Kellogg himself has said: "There is nothing in the American draft which restricts or impairs in any way the right of self-defence."

The Covenant aims at the ideal, but takes the world as it is with its many imperfections. The Pact conceives a perfect world in which war would be impossible; but the Nation which puts it forward cannot and does not ignore the present condition, and consequently has not ceased to lay down warships and make other provision not quite consistent with its noble ideal. To me the main point in connection with the Covenant and the Pact is the satisfaction to be derived from the knowledge that by these means the moral conscience of the world is being aroused to the iniquity of war and to the justice of goodwill and peace. Universal peace not having been secured, it is well in considering the Naval problem to draw attention to the efforts being made for limitation or reduction in armaments.

The fifth edition of the League of Nations Armaments Book reports that in 1928 the world naval tonnage had increased, though here again it falls some 1,650,000 tons below that of 1913. The largest increase since 1913 is on the part of the United States of America, and the most continuous Japan. British total tonnage is not much more than half of the 1913 total.

CONFERENCE AT GENEVA.

In 1927 the United States of America issued invitations to Britain, Japan, France and Italy, to a Naval Conference at Geneva, but only Great Britain and Japan accepted. The first meeting was held on the 20th June, 1927. In the interest of economy, and to meet the difficulty owing to no restriction on the construction of cruisers under 10,000 tons having been imposed at Washington in 1921, Great Britain proposed:—

- (a) An increase in the life of capital ships from 20 to 26 years.
- (b) Reduction in the size of future battleships from 35,000 tons to 30,000 tons, and in guns from 16 inch to 13.5 inch.
- (c) Cruisers to be divided into two classes: Class 1—Cruisers of a maximum tonnage of 10,000 tons with 8-inch guns to be subject to the 5-5-3 ratio provided at Washington for capital ships. Class 2—Cruisers up to a maximum of 7,500 tons with 6-inch guns not to be subject to limitation.
- (d) Certain limitations on the size, number, and armament of destroyers and submarines.

On the question of cruisers British and American viewpoints were definitely contradictory, and the Conference failed.

It is well to pause here and consider the difference in the problems of Naval Defence as between the United States of America and the British Empire. The United States, immense country that it is, contains within its own boundaries large opportunities for the supply of foodstuffs and raw materials, and its overseas responsibilities extend to Hawaii and Samoa and the Philippines.

The British Empire is widespread over the seas. Its main lines of communication measure some 80,000 miles, on which an average of 9,500,000 tons of merchant shipping are continually on the move.

At the outbreak of the War Britain's cruiser strength was 114 ships, and Viscount Jellicoe has estimated now the War is over that the minimum requirements of the Empire are 70 cruisers, of which at least 45 are required for direct trade protection.

Nor can we neglect to remind our American friends of the reminder Lord Balfour gave them, at the Washington Conference in 1921, when he said: "Suppose it was a familiar thought that there was never a moment of the year when within the limits of your State there was more than seven weeks' food for its population and that food could only be replenished by overseas communication."

Contrast this with what Americans themselves have to say about their country. In his book "The Restless Pacific," Nicholas Roosevelt writes:—

The idea that the United States is self-sufficing in the event of war is misleading. The people would not starve, nor would they suffer under a blockade as much as did the British or Germans during the War. But the United States is now de-pendent on distant parts for many essentials. To mention all the articles which would have to be imported from Asia in the event of a war would fill a long list. Among them are antimony, camphor, coconut shells, quinine, rubber, silk and tungsten.

To make safe the supply of food and raw materials; to protect trade and interchange, requires a general sea-going fleet, in the provision of which each member of the Commonwealth of British Nations must take its share, but the War has led us to realise that to the sea-going fleet there must be added sufficient convoy vessels, as experience has shown that when hostile forces are at sea, trade is best protected by a system under which ships sail in convoys.

NEW ZEALAND'S WIDE RESPONSIBILITIES.

But let us get nearer home and consider the question from the point of view of New Zealand. When considering the question of Naval Defence it is important that constant attention should be directed to the widespread nature of the obligations and consequent difficulties in Administration for which New Zealand is responsible. It includes within its jurisdiction not only the two main islands and Stewart Island, but also certain outlying islands, the chief of which are the Three Kings, Chatham, Auckland, Campbell, Antipodes, Bounty and the Snares. In 1887 the Kermadec Islands were declared to be a part of New Zealand, and, in 1901 the annexed islands of the Cook Group were included in our boundary.

New Zealand administration, therefore, extends over lands widespread in the Pacific, reaching in the north to the island of Penrhyn, less than nine degrees from the Equator, and extending south to the Ross Sea Dependency. Jointly with the British Government and the Commonwealth of Australia it is concerned with the Mandate for Nauru Island, situated almost on the Equator. Jointly, therefore, and on its own account, the Dominion of New Zealand is responsible for the administration of lands in the Pacific extending from the Equator to the South Pole.

At the outbreak of the War in 1914. our Expeditionary Force took possession of German Samoa, which is now administered by our Government under Mandate from the League of Nations.

Recently our difficulties in administering the Mandated territory and our obligations in this respect to the League of Nations have been quite apparent, but what is not so clear is the responsibility which rests upon New Zealand in the control of the Ross Sea Dependency and the issue by us of licenses for whale-fishing in that area. This carries with it the preservation of the whale from total destruction. In the performance of this duty at least two difficulties arise, firstly, the policing of these waters to prevent fishing without a license, and secondly, the definition of the limit of territorial waters. There does not appear to be any very definite international understanding about these limits; some countries have adopted three miles, others a more extended area.

When asked by the other High Commissioners to prepare a memorandum of subjects which we considered should be dealt with at the Imperial Conference in 1926, I included "The Limits of Territorial Waters; the definition of terra firma from which territorial waters are measured; the possibility of the ice barrier being taken as the point from which measurement is begun; the possibility of an international arrangement being-made in the interests of the preservation of the whale or other denizen of the sea."

It is important to be able to define the territorial limits, as our license to fish for whales applies to these limits, and does not prevent fishing in the open sea. Much detailed information and some suggestions about territorial waters are given in a recent publication issued by the League of Nations, but there is little to add to what I have already written.

The importance of New Zealand as a source of coal supply has already been alluded to. It is only necessary to add that about the year 1904 the Admiralty let a contract to the Westport Coal Company for the supply of coal to naval vessels on the Australian and East Indies Stations, and an Admiralty officer was appointed to supervise the execution of the contract.

Reference has already been made to the laying of mines at the North Cape and western entrance to Cook Strait without our knowing anything about them. It is sufficient to tell you of the haphazard way in which these mine fields were discovered, to enable you to judge of the urgent need for some means of observation, possibly from the air, and of ships of war to deal with the raider. On the raider Wolf, which laid the mines, there was a prisoner of war, who was diplomatic enough to secure a bottle and some paper upon which he wrote down the location of the fields and recorded the number of mines as they were dropped into the water. Providence and currents carried the bottle after the prisoner had dropped it into the sea to the Celebes Islands. From the Celebes the information was conveyed to the Admiralty and so to New Zealand.

THE PROBLEM OF THE FUTURE.

The Washington Conference limited aircraft-carriers on the 5-5-3 ratio, so it will be unreasonable to expect any help from the British Unit, though we may develop our own aircraft to use as eyes to watch for the possible mine-layer. But one may fairly ask our American friends, who question our claim for auxiliary naval craft without restricted limit, for sympathetic consideration when the coasts of New Zealand and the many possessions of the British Empire bordering on the seas may be subjected to such a menace at their very doors.

The position at the present time with respect to parity as between the United States and the British Empire, the disarmament problem and the efforts for peace, may be described as in a state of flux. Preparatory commissions and conferences have been organised by the League of Nations, without definite result, though education is proceeding, as it must do, when Americans of the standing of Hugh Gibson remark, as he did in 1927, that "No effective approach to the problem could be made by methods of reduction alone, and genuine disarmament would follow only from a change of attitude towards the use of force."

The questions of the Freedom of the Sea, the blockade, contraband of war and continuous voyage, appear to be undetermined. In 1918 Woodrow Wilson, in the second of his Fourteen Points, suggested "Absolute freedom—alike in peace and war—except as seas may be closed in whole or in part by international action."

Great Britain has claimed to be the sole judge when she is at war as to when seas should be closed to neutral trade. Some Americans insist on trade with all belligerents, irrespective of whether a matter of public right was involved or not. One American writer says: "The United States does maintain that international law confers no privilege on a pacific blockader to enforce its measures against the ships of a third State," and he suggests that Britain abandon blockade and that the United States add to the Treaty of Paris (signed August, 1928) a provision to cut off intercourse between its own territory and that of the treaty-breaking belligerent, without itself becoming a party to the conflict.

John W. Davis, American Ambassador in London (1918-21) has written that the United States insists upon "freedom of the seas," but just how much freedom is not clear, for there are many shades of American opinion. All are agreed that there shall be rules, and he refers to nice definitions of search, seizure, contraband, blockade, continuous voyage, and so on. What is most interesting is his declaration that the United States should accept what the Kellogg Treaty implies, viz., "that all the Nations whose treaty is broken or threatened so to be, have a mandate to concert measures to prevent the breach or to repress it. Conciliation is idle, unless it leads to a concert of measures of some sort, economic, diplomatic, or what not, of a co-operative character."

If this ideal can be achieved, if the definition of "what not" may be taken to include the use of force if necessary, then, as Davis says, under the assumed circumstances neutrality would be immoral, and the danger to Great Britain of attack on vital supplies would be met if freedom of the seas were secured.

Meanwhile the sixth session of the Preparatory Commission for Disarmament opened on the 15th April, 1929, and Mr. Hugh Gibson held out an olive branch saying that the United States might accept a combination of "total tonnage" with "tonnage by categories." Mr. Gibson's idea was that a radical general reduction is possible only on the theory of relative needs, and he indicated that President Hoover accepts as a basis of discussion the French proposal to assign total tonnage to each nation; to divide this total among categories of ships by specified tonnages and to allow certain categories to be increased by an agreed percentage withdrawn from other categories. This would mean that France, for instance, could have more than her quota of submarines by foregoing a cruiser or two.

What may be the result of the consideration of the suggestions made by Mr. Gibson and of the conferences between the British Prime Minister and Mr. Dawes cannot be foretold. There are Americans who say:

"The purpose of the Navy is defence, but if war comes it must be able to control the enemy's fleet and commerce. The last war taught the world the value of commerce prevention, in bringing a hostile nation to terms. Should America be drawn into another war, this would be one of the principal weapons of victory."

A writer in the "Round Table," of March, 1928 (p. 244) says:

It seems unlikely that the Senate would ratify an agreement which would permit European Powers to pour supplies into Mexico in the event of war, and forbid the American Navy to intercept them. To-day if a conference were held Great Britain and the United States of America would almost certainly be found standing out for drastic rights, as against the whole of the rest of the world. The basic issue is not what are the rights of a belligerent at sea, but when belligerents should be allowed to interfere with neutral commerce.

The question is whether any Naval Power, in waging its own "private" wars, is to interrupt the trade of the rest of the world, as it is apparently entitled to do under international law as it exists to-day. If the right to declare a blockade is limited to occasions justified by international authority of some kind large reductions in ships are possible.