

1900.

NEW ZEALAND.

COLONIAL DEFENCE.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE PREMIER, HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR, AND HIS EXCELLENCY THE ADMIRAL, IN REFERENCE TO THE DEFENCE SCHEME PROPOUNDED BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE PREMIER.

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

Premier's Office, Wellington, 21st July, 1900.

MEMORANDUM for His Excellency the GOVERNOR.

THE Premier presents his compliments to His Excellency, and begs to forward herewith two copies of an outline of a defence scheme, embracing the formation of an Imperial Reserve Force.

As the scheme has to be submitted to a Select Committee of the House of Representatives, the Premier would be glad if His Excellency would forward a copy of it to His Excellency the Admiral, and inform him that any suggestions made thereon would be much appreciated by the Premier and be very useful to the Committee.

R. J. SEDDON.

MY LORD,—

“Royal Arthur,” at Westport, New Zealand, 3rd August, 1900.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Your Excellency's despatch of the 21st ultimo covering a Parliamentary paper by the Right Hon. the Premier on the general question of colonial defence, which I have read with much interest and pleasure.

2. With regard to that part of the scheme which bears on naval matters, I think Your Excellency and Mr. Seddon will agree that before deciding on a system of training for the naval reserves it is necessary that the duties which officers and men will be required to perform on the outbreak of war be clearly specified. If they are to garrison forts, and solely carry out the “examination duties” at the various ports, it is clearly useless to drill and train them to ship's guns on naval mountings. If, on the other hand, they are really to be a naval reserve, and available for service in Her Majesty's ships to fill vacancies during war time, I am of opinion that they should be thoroughly drilled in the use of the guns on board Her Majesty's ships, and not in garrison artillery work.

3. The term “naval reserves,” as at present used in some of the colonies, appears to me to be a misnomer, and the whole question is one which, in my opinion, requires remodelling, and which will no doubt be taken in hand and settled with the scheme for federal defence.

4. I do not consider that merchant steamers would make suitable cruisers locally. An enemy's vessel in these waters would not be one with which the converted merchant steamer could hope to cope.

5. The question of the formation of a colonial naval reserve will, now that federation is an accomplished fact, no doubt engage the attention of the Imperial and Colonial Governments, and I have therefore taken the liberty of submitting Your Excellency's letter and its enclosure to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.

I have, &c.,

H. S. PEARSON, Rear Admiral,
Commander in Chief.

His Excellency the Right Hon. the Earl of Ranfurly, K.C.M.G.,
Governor of New Zealand.

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