

at a critical moment, but not one on which the Empire would be justified in relying in any way to the exclusion of its own regular troops; and my point is that cases must and will arise in which we shall have to ask, in which we shall require a larger force than we have of our own, and in which the colonies who send it us on the ground that they think us worthy of support in a particular emergency should be prepared to send us reliable forces.

Now, your time is of value, and I do not want to enlarge on the many other features which are put before me by my military advisers on this subject, but what I would ask is this: that out of this very large number of men who are only trained in some degree in the colonies, we must look, even if it was for only one in four to be specially trained, and to be held in readiness for such an emergency. I propose that those men should be trained with a liability to oversea service, that they should realise that they are a part of the Army Reserve of the Imperial Force, that their services are absolutely pledged in the event of the Government to which they belong proffering assistance to the Imperial forces in the emergency. I would ask that they should receive such training as might be agreed upon between our military authorities and the Government concerned, and that they should be fully organized and fully equipped with a view to acting together and drilling together in the battalions or regiments with which they would take the field. I do not want to go into the details of the question, because I think perhaps it is a question where we want first to have the principle decided. I do not want to go into the questions of what their status would be with regard to other corps; whether there should be any attachment to the regiments at home; whether there should be any exchange of units which has often been talked about, and was talked about at this Conference in 1897; whether the officers who are to accept service in this particular force should have any claim on Imperial commissions.

All those, I think, are questions which we must take up and deal with; but, of course, there is the great question of expenditure. I would point out that this is not a large financial question. The number of men asked for is so comparatively small that it is unlikely that there would be a difficulty in getting men to pledge themselves, and the reserve pay which we give after all only amounts to £9 per man per annum. That reserve pay, over a force of 20,000 men, would only amount to £180,000 a year over the whole of the colonies, and I am by no means prepared to say, in looking to the last paragraph of Mr. Seddon's motion, that it would not be a fair thing to ask the Imperial Government to assist in that respect in case they really had a call on those troops. Of course, if these troops are entirely under the control of the Colonial Government, and if their colony says, which it very possibly would, "We will not pledge ourselves to send you any men until we know the emergency and until we have the assent of our Parliament for agreeing to take part in that particular emergency," it would probably be held that so long as the Colonial Government kept the control as to the employment of the troops, they should pay them. For ourselves, if it is held that any troops are part of our recognised Army Reserve, I think it would not be unreasonable for the Imperial Exchequer to bear some portion of the charge. I will not develop the question further; but I would point out that when I have spoken of £180,000 divided between the whole of the colonies, I am speaking of a relatively small figure compared to that which has been recently added to our estimates. On a most careful review by the Cabinet of the necessities of the case within two years—the years 1900 and 1901—we have added no less than £9,000,000 sterling to the peace estimates for the army, and therefore the expenditure which I suggest may possibly not be grudged by the colonies, though I think it may be met by retrenchment in some other quarters. In respect of figures it would only represent an expenditure in the whole of the colonies of one-fiftieth of the sum which, in two years, the Imperial Government has had to take upon its shoulders. I would only urge before I sit down that these proposals are dictated not in the least by any idea of entering into an ambitious competition with other nations as to the extent of our land armaments; but up to now Great Britain has always been the last in the field. We cannot afford to be the last in the field. If we are forced into defensive action for any of our dependencies, we are bound to be able to strike as quickly, or quicker, than any other Powers. That is the object of the whole of our present organization at the War Office, which has advanced most rapidly within the last two or three years; and I sincerely trust that the colonial Governments may see their way to giving us, in this particular form, the support which they have given us in so unstinted a manner under the circumstances of the late war.

The discussion revealed considerable difference of opinion amongst the members. While the representatives of Cape Colony and Natal were disposed to fall in with the policy suggested by Mr. Seddon and the Secretary of State for War—of having a special body of troops ear-marked for Imperial service—the representatives of Canada and Australia were of opinion that the best course to pursue was to endeavour to raise the standard of training for the general body of their forces, to organize the departmental services and equipment required for the mobilisation of a field force, leaving it to the colony, when the need arose, to determine how and to what extent it should render assistance. The Imperial sentiment in the colonies was steadily growing, and their action in the late war left no room for doubt that such assistance would be given readily and effectively and to the utmost of their ability in any future emergency.

To establish a special force, set apart for general Imperial service, and practically under the absolute control of the Imperial Government, was objectionable in principle as derogating from the powers of self-government enjoyed by them, and would be calculated to impede the general improvement in training and organization of their defence forces, and, consequently, their ability to render effective help, if it should be required.

In the result it was decided that, if His Majesty's Government on consideration should think it desirable to take action on the suggestion of the Secretary of State for War in the case of those colonies which were disposed to fall in with it, it would be best to do so through the usual channel of official correspondence. The views of the Canadian Ministers on the general question of defence were specially set forth in the annexed memorandum (Appendix VI.)