

Premiers, except Mr. Kingston, who declined to vote pending further consideration of a scheme, which he put before the Conference, for the establishment of a branch of the Royal Naval Reserve in Australia.

The Prime Minister of the Cape also announced to the Conference that, in pursuance of the resolution passed by the Legislature of that colony, in favour of a contribution towards the navy, he was prepared to offer on behalf of the colony an unconditional contribution of the cost of a first-class battleship. This spontaneous offer was received with grateful appreciation by Her Majesty's Government and the members of the Conference.

#### *Military Defence.*

In discussing other questions of Imperial defence, the Conference had the advantage of the presence of Captain Nathan, Secretary of the Colonial Defence Committee, who was able to furnish explanations to the members on various points, and to point out the steps which, in the opinion of the Committee, were most needed in each colony to complete its preparedness for any emergency. The Premiers all agreed to give the views expressed their careful consideration when, on their return to their respective colonies, they were in a position to consult their colleagues and Parliaments.

The suggestion made for an occasional interchange of military units between the Mother-country and the colonies was generally recognised as one likely to prove useful in increasing the efficiency of the colonial forces, and the Premiers of those colonies which possess permanent forces of a purely military character expressed their intention of examining, on their return, what legislative or other measures might be necessary in order to give effect to it as opportunity offered.

On behalf of the War Office the Conference was informed that, with a view to securing uniformity in the arms and ammunition used by the military forces throughout the Empire, the Secretary of State for War was prepared to make an offer for the exchange (or conversion) of the Martini-Henry rifles at present in use for rifles of a smaller calibre now exclusively adapted by the navy and army.

#### TREATIES WITH JAPAN AND TUNIS.

The question of the treaty with Japan was brought before the Conference, but, with the exception of Queensland, Newfoundland, and Natal, the Premiers declared that they were not prepared to abandon their former attitude with regard to the treaty, to which they did not desire to adhere. They also, with the exception of the Premier of Newfoundland, stated that they did not wish the colonies they represented to become parties to the Convention in regard to trade with Tunis now being negotiated with France.

#### COLOURED IMMIGRATION.

On the question of the legislative measures which have been passed by various colonies for the exclusion of coloured immigrants a full exchange of views took place, and though no definite agreement was reached at the meeting, as the Premiers desired to consult their colleagues and Parliaments on the subject, Her Majesty's Government have every expectation that the natural desire of the colonies to protect themselves against an overwhelming influx of Asiatics can be attained without placing a stigma upon any of Her Majesty's subjects on the sole ground of race or colour.

#### POSTAL COMMUNICATIONS.

With regard to postal communications within the Empire, it appeared that in the present financial circumstances of the colonies an Imperial penny post was impracticable, although the Prime Ministers of the Cape Colony and Natal declared themselves in favour of such a step, and expressed their belief that the Legislatures of their colonies would be prepared to give effect to it.

#### PACIFIC CABLE.

The question of the proposed Pacific cable was brought up, but the majority of the Premiers desired that the subject should be deferred until they had had time to consider the report of the Committee appointed to consider the question last year. It was, however, pointed out to the members of the Conference that the matter was not one in which the United Kingdom was taking the initiative, although Her Majesty's Government were ready to consider any proposal for working with and assisting the colonies if they attached great importance to the project, and that they would now await definite proposals from the colonies interested before proceeding further in the matter.

#### INVESTMENT OF TRUST FUNDS.

At the last meeting of the Conference a resolution was passed unanimously by those of the Premiers who were still present to the following effect: "Those assembled are of the opinion that the time has arrived when all restriction which prevents investments of trust funds in colonial stock should be removed." This resolution will be communicated to and commended to the consideration of the proper authorities.

#### PARIS EXHIBITION.

Amongst minor questions discussed was that of the representation of the colonies at the Paris Exhibition of 1900. Her Majesty's Government had originally desired that the Empire as a whole should exhibit in one building, but this was found to be impracticable, the French Government not being able to put the requisite amount of space at the disposal of Her Majesty's Government. Under the changed conditions, only the Premiers of Canada, New South Wales, Queensland, and Cape Colony declared their intention of being represented; while the Premiers of