

In one direction, however, little or no progress has been made. In the Oversea Dominions no organization has yet been devised for rendering assistance to other parts of the Empire in an emergency. The time seems to have arrived when this important question should be considered.

7. It is fully realised that in the hour of danger the ties of kinship and affection which bind the Self-governing Dominions to the Empire will prompt them to rally with enthusiasm to its aid. There seems, however, some reason to fear that an idea prevails that this help may be organized at leisure after hostilities have broken out. In certain circumstances no doubt this might be the case, but the conditions of modern warfare make it probable that great naval and military events will immediately follow, even if they do not precede, a declaration of war. If, therefore, organizations have to be improvised, staffs created, transport and equipment provided, and plans matured, after the outbreak of hostilities, the value of any assistance, however willingly and enthusiastically given, will be greatly lessened, even if such assistance be not altogether belated.

The undesirability of improvised forces.

Modern warfare seldom admits of deliberation and improvisation after the outbreak of hostilities. It demands such a peace system that mobilization and concentration, directly they are ordered, can proceed smoothly and rapidly. Our ability to render prompt assistance to any threatened part of the Empire, and the value of our friendship to possible allies, depend upon the number of men available for over-sea service, and the rapidity with which they can be conveyed to the decisive point.

The present situation of the Empire demands a frank and free interchange of views upon this subject.

8. It is not suggested that any one of the Dominions should be asked to undertake a definite obligation. Whatever is done must be done spontaneously and with due regard to the circumstances in which each one of them is situated. It is also realised that there are many obstacles to be surmounted before any system of mutual support can be satisfactorily elaborated. War, however, can only be brought to a decisive and successful conclusion by the offensive action of military force, combined in our case with naval superiority; and just as the British Government maintains such military force as its resources permit ready and able to proceed, in the furtherance of Imperial aims and interests, to any part of the world, so also might the forces of the Dominions be organized in such a way that their Governments would be ready, when the necessity should arise, to co-operate with the Mother Country and with each other to such extent as might seem good to them, without hasty improvisation, but with speed and certainty.

Definite obligation not to be imposed.

9. Under the existing Militia and Defence Acts of the various Dominions their Governments have no power to employ military forces outside their territories in furtherance of Imperial interests.

Citizen forces.

Moreover, the forces raised over-seas are maintained on a militia basis. They have been so raised and organized in order to provide economically for the local defence of young nations whose development would be retarded by the much higher cost of maintaining regular forces. Citizen forces so constituted usually undertake responsibility for home defence only, but it is hoped that it may be within the power of the Self-governing Dominions so to organize their forces as not only to provide for local defence, but also to be in a position to share to the extent of their will and resources in the defence of the Empire as a whole.

10. It is confidently anticipated that co-operation will be forthcoming from all parts of the Empire in time of need. But, in order to utilise these resources from over-seas to the best advantage, it is urged that the arrangements for organizing, training, and mobilising the troops of the Oversea Dominions, while primarily directed to local defence, should also include the possibility of the employment of a portion of such troops in a wider sphere.

Organization for defence.

11. The General Staff are well aware that in discussing the question of co-operation they are treading upon difficult and even delicate ground. They feel sure, however, that nothing but good can result from a clear statement at this Conference of the position of the Mother Country which, being responsible for

Relative position of the Dominions.