

Lord of the Admiralty, the Secretary of State for War, and the Secretary of State for Air, each of whom explained to the Conference the aspects of defence which concerned his special responsibilities.

In addition to these statements there was a full and frank interchange of views in which the standpoints of the various representatives and the circumstances of their countries were made clear. There were also discussions at the Admiralty and Air Ministry at which naval and air defence were dealt with in greater detail. The points involved were explained by the Chiefs of the Naval and Air Staffs respectively, and were further examined.

In connection with naval defence one matter of immediate interest came before the Conference—namely, the projected Empire cruise of a squadron of modern warships. The First Lord of the Admiralty explained that the project was that two capital ships, the “Hood” and the “Repulse,” together with a small squadron of modern light cruisers, should visit South Africa, Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand, and return by way of British Columbia, the Panama Canal, and eastern Canada. The light cruisers would accompany the battle-cruisers as far as British Columbia, but would return to England by way of the west coast of South America and Cape Horn. The Dominion Prime Ministers expressed their appreciation of this proposal, and assured the Conference that the ships would be most heartily welcomed in their countries.

After the whole field of defence had been surveyed, the Conference decided that it would be advisable to record in the following resolutions its conclusions on the chief matters which had been discussed :—

(1.) The Conference affirms that it is necessary to provide for the adequate defence of the territories and trade of the several countries comprising the British Empire.

(2.) In this connection the Conference expressly recognizes that it is for the Parliaments of the several parts of the Empire, upon the recommendations of their respective Governments, to decide the nature and extent of any action which should be taken by them.

(3.) Subject to this provision, the Conference suggests the following as guiding principles :—

- (a.) The primary responsibility of each portion of the Empire represented at the Conference for its own local defence.
- (b.) Adequate provision for safeguarding the maritime communications of the several parts of the Empire and the routes and waterways along and through which their armed forces and trade pass.
- (c.) The provision of naval bases and facilities for repair and fuel so as to ensure the mobility of the fleets.
- (d.) The desirability of the maintenance of a minimum standard of naval strength—namely, equality with the naval strength of any foreign Power, in accordance with the provisions of the Washington Treaty on Limitation of Armament as approved by Great Britain, all the self-governing Dominions, and India.
- (e.) The desirability of the development of the Air Forces in the several countries of the Empire upon such lines as will make it possible, by means of the adoption, as far as practicable, of a common system of organization and training, and the use of uniform manuals, patterns of arms, equipment, and stores (with the exception of the type of aircraft), for each part of the Empire as it may determine to co-operate with other parts with the least possible delay and the greatest efficiency.

(4.) In the application of these principles to the several parts of the Empire concerned the Conference takes note of—

- (a.) The deep interest of the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand, and India in the provision of a naval base at Singapore, as essential for ensuring the mobility necessary to provide for the security of the territories and trade of the Empire in eastern waters.