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Singapore, however, is of vital importance to the scheme of Empire Defence in the Pacific, and therefore to New Zealand in particular. Any assistance, either financial or in material, that she may find herself able to offer towards its development would be welcomed.

VII.—Communications.

11. In order to complete the network of W/T stations necessary to adequately cover the area of the Pacific Islands, the stations at Awanui and Apia should be modernised and made capable of maintaining communication with Sydney.

It is also important that the personnel of these stations should be under Naval discipline in war time, and it is suggested that they should be enrolled in the Volunteer Reserve proposed in paragraph 8.

Admiralty, June 11, 1923.
P.D. 01806.

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SECRET.

E-60.

(Also C.I.D. No. 197-C.)

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COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE.

ESTABLISHMENT OF NAVAL BASE AT SINGAPORE AND ITS EFFECT UPON THE FOREIGN AND NAVAL POLICY OF THE EMPIRE.

(Approved by the Standing Defence Sub-Committee on June 19, 1923,
S.S. 33rd Minutes.)

WITH reference to the Minute of the 18th May, 1923, signed on behalf of the South African Government by General Smuts and forwarded by the Governor-General (Appendix), protesting against the announcement of the decision in regard to Singapore pending the discussion of the whole subject by the Imperial Conference, the history of this question, including the facts as to what happened at the Imperial Conference in 1921 and at the Washington Conference, 1921-22, is as follows :—

2. Until the British Fleet was centralised in Home waters in consequence of the development of the German menace, a British Battle Fleet was maintained in the Pacific as well as in the Mediterranean, and the base at Hong Kong was maintained on the scale necessary for a first-class Naval base under the conditions prevailing in those days. During the ten years preceding the war all modern battleships were withdrawn from the China Station in accord with the policy of concentration in Home waters which was forced upon the Admiralty by the development of the German menace. During the nineteen years which have elapsed since this withdrawal began, the increase in the size of battleships, the developments of ordnance and the introduction of oil fuel have rendered Hong Kong in its present state useless as a base for a modern Battle Fleet. The Navy was therefore in the position that, if political circumstances should ever render it desirable again to maintain a Battle Fleet in the Pacific, they would be unable to do so owing to the lack of any Naval base.

3. In the Memorandum on Naval Policy (E. 4 of February 1921), which was prepared by the Admiralty for the Imperial Conference, 1921, reasons were put down why it would be preferable to develop a new Naval base at Singapore rather than to bring the base at Hong Kong up to date.

4. The original decision to create a naval base at Singapore was taken by the late Cabinet on the 16th June, 1921.

5. The reasons for this decision were communicated to the Imperial Conference, in the first instance, by Mr. Balfour on the 28th June, 1921 (E.-8th Meeting). It is interesting to note that the occasion chosen by Mr. Balfour to make this statement was during the discussion on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and that he gave as one of the principal reasons in support of renewing the Anglo-Japanese Alliance the necessity of gaining the considerable time required for the creation of a base at Singapore :—

“ In these circumstances, we have come to the conclusion that one of the most pressing needs for Imperial Defence is that Singapore should be made into a place where the British Fleet can concentrate for the defence of the Empire, of our interests in the East, our interests in India, our interests in Australia, our interests in New Zealand, our interests in the smaller Possessions there, and that for that purpose it is absolutely necessary to undertake works at Singapore. Those works cannot be finished in a day. They cannot be finished in a year. They must take some time to complete.

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