

5. Generally to advise the Imperial Government on all questions bearing on the mining and metallurgical industries. To perform this function efficiently it is essential that complete information should be available and also that the industries concerned should be consulted through their respective organisations.

The institutions to which I have referred have long felt the necessity for such a Department as that proposed but since the outbreak of war and the consequent revelation of the dangerous position into which these vital Imperial interests had been allowed to drift, the necessity has been demonstrated over and over again. It is not too much to assert that if a properly organised and efficiently conducted Department of Mines and Metals had been established in Great Britain much valuable time, many lives and vast sums of money would have been saved to the Nation in the conduct of the war.

DEPARTMENTAL CO-OPERATION.

It is a matter of common knowledge that in the activities of the permanent departments of the Governments of the different states constituting the British Empire there is not the active co-operation that should prevail if efficient progress is to be secured. Perhaps I may be permitted to cite an example or two of a defect of this kind which was recently brought to my attention. The Geological Survey of Great Britain as you all know, has a magnificent record to its credit. Its operations in the British Isles have been most complete and its reports are most voluminous and very exhaustive. It has happened, however, that after its reports have been presented to Parliament they have been carefully filed away and no special attempt has been made to bring their contents in a definite, particularised, and effectively useful manner before the industrial organisations of the country. When the War broke out it happened that one of the largest refining and reduction works in England found their supplies of a particular flux required by them in the treatment of their ores entirely cut off. The firm had been accustomed to import the flux from mines under the control of one of the Central Powers. A representative of the Institution of Mining and Metallurgy happening to call on this firm learned of their dilemma, and to the chagrin of its members pointed out that the Geological Reports mentioned above contained a detailed account of large deposits of this particular flux situated in England within 10 miles of their works. It is needless to tell you that in a very short time a light railway was constructed between the deposits and the works and the firm is now rejoiced to find that it can carry on its operations without let or hindrance and at a greatly reduced cost.