

Years ago, when he served on the Hartington Commission, he was opposed to the creation of a General Staff, which his colleagues recommended.

"I do not see that any case of necessity has been made out," he wrote in his dissentient memorandum. That his views have undergone no material alteration is evident from a speech which he made when the Defence Committee was under discussion last summer.

As the subject was brought forward on a motion in connection with the Appropriation Bill, and so late in the Session as August 2, the Prime Minister's declaration did not receive the attention it deserves, and a useful purpose may be served by bringing its more remarkable points to notice.

Sir Henry said, *inter alia* :

I have never been strongly prejudiced in favour of the Committee of Imperial Defence. I was always afraid it might get beyond its proper bounds, that it might interfere with the responsibility of the Cabinet and the Ministers charged with the two great departments [War Office and Admiralty], and that, therefore, the results might be unfortunate in the interests of the country. . . . The Committee of Imperial Defence is an opportunity for the Government to fortify itself with regard to the naval and military policy and the general defence of the Empire by the direct opinion of the best experts in the two Services. The Naval and Military Authorities meet round a table with the members of the Government and discuss all the technical questions which are brought before it [sic] *but it has nothing to do with policy, nothing whatever to do with the naval and military policy on a large scale.* To my mind, it has nothing to do with the question of what is the [naval] standard of two or three nations we should be equal to. . . . The right hon. gentleman [Mr. Balfour], if he had been fortunate or unfortunate enough to be summoned to one of our meetings, could not have been asked whether he agreed with me that some standards laid down for the Navy are excessive and possibly in their nature absurd. *He would not be asked to agree with the Secretary for War whether the reductions in the Army can safely be made with the prospect which is before us of being able to create, expand and develop a force sufficient for the defence of the country.* These are questions of high policy with which the Cabinet deals, but which are beyond and above, in that stage of them at least, the Committee of Imperial Defence.

The italics, of course, are mine. The extracts are taken from the *Times* report.