

*Defence of Sea Coasts*

Oriental-Slav combination. A treaty has been made by which China, Japan and Russia, make a defensive or possibly an offensive alliance. The resources of China are almost untold as regards population, and when they are properly trained, equipped and led, they make very good soldiers; they are second to none. China is to have a peace army of 800,000, capable of expansion to double that number, to be trained, educated and equipped by the genius, thoroughness and energy of the Japanese. The Japs have their own excellent fleet and a peace army of 250,000, convertible in three weeks to 500,000. Above all, they have the co-operation of Russia with her great ability to supply not only men, but food, and greatest of all, her ability to create a diversion in Europe by starting a war in Europe in such a way as to require the concentration of armies and fleets there. It is a combination that is, to a large extent, I will not say irresistible, but very strong and powerful. This combination is aimed, so it is stated, against any possible combination of the United States, Great Britain and France, but I notice that the door has been thrown open for Germany to enter into this Slav-Oriental combination, and it is too much to expect that she would not take advantage of such a favourable opportunity. These three powers the two oriental nations and Russia, have a combined population of 522,000,000 and, with Germany, 582,000,000 ranged against what? Against 185,000,000 of France, Britain and the United States. That is rather more than one-third if you leave out Germany, and considerably less than one-third if you take Germany in.

Under these conditions it is not a dream to say that war may any day, and will some day, occur, and it is more than likely it will occur on the Pacific. I have not quoted my opinion; I have quoted the opinion of Major General MacBrien. Are we to repeat history again? Britain had a very able and experienced soldier in the person of Lord Roberts who spent the last years of his life in warning Britain what was to come. His opinion was based on no fanatic idea of militarism but on his reading of the signs of the times, just as a farmer reads the prospects of the weather or the crops. They paid that man a big sum for his work, and when they received his recommendations they laughed at them. We have since paid for that. In this instance, we have the recommendations of Major General MacBrien who points to a war on the Pacific.

[Mr. Neill.]

Mr. BIRD: Does the hon. gentleman not think that the soundness and elasticity of our national credit is a better security for our nation than an armament which will possibly be obsolete before it is built?

Mr. NEILL: I must confess I do not think so. When I go out to fight, I want something to fight with, not an economic situation of a problematical kind.

Mr. BIRD: Is it not a fact that in the recent war the nations whose credit was most elastic, healthy, eventually won the war against nations that were armed in a far superior way than ourselves?

Mr. NEILL: Yes, in the long run that is true. But who stood in the forefront and paid the price at the beginning?

I laid down the proposition that we need defence, and if we accept that, we must now address ourselves to the question as to what we have either in the way of our own resources, or what we may expect from others. On the Pacific we have practically nothing but one or two boats with a few obsolete land guns. We have a destroyer which mounts three 4-inch guns instead of four 4.7 guns as a modern boat should have. It is hopeless so far as its radius is concerned; it could not hit anything five miles off. It is hopelessly out-classed by modern boats of the same type, and it was built in the early years of the war when material and time were considerations of importance.

Mr. CARROLL: The hon. member, I suppose, is aware of the fact that these boats are simply used for training purposes.

Mr. NEILL: Largely, but they are all we have.

Mr. GARLAND (Bow River): Is there any danger that this will lead to another Petersen subsidy, for arms?

Mr. NEILL: The subject is altogether too important to be treated lightly. We shall deal with the Petersen subsidy at the right time, and I am sorry to hear the hon. member for Bow River treating lightly a subject the importance of which he may come to recognize later on. I would ask hon. gentlemen not to interrupt me further because I want to finish with this destroyer before six o'clock. It is made of plates of steel three-sixteenths of an inch thick, that is, about double the thickness of an ordinary strand of telephone wire. And it is not galvanized. Now, anyone who has lived near the coast,