

TIGHT BINDING.

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the basis of its policy and the main features of the programmes that sought to implement them were as follows:—

- (i) *Naval principles providing for the maintenance of adequate naval strength, and the provision of naval bases and facilities for repair and fuel.*

The construction of a new cruiser and two new sloops.

The re-armament of the fixed defences and provision of air co-operation.

Facilities for naval repairs and oil storage.

- (ii) *Responsibility for Local Defence.*

In addition to strengthening the fixed defences of the important ports, the Australian Government had recently provided a special increase in the Army vote to bring the Field Army of seven divisions up to its minimum nucleus establishment. The strength of the permanent forces was also being increased and improvements were being effected in the efficiency, armament and equipment of the Army.

The Air Force would complete this year Part I of the scheme laid down by Sir John Salmond, and have a first line strength of eight squadrons and 96 aircraft.

The building up of the Munitions Supply organisation had reached the stage that the Government Factories had developed the capacity for the production of the various types of the ordinary requirements of the Army, Navy and Air Force, and these resources were being further expanded. A survey of civil industry was also being carried out to determine the possibilities of capacity for production, and to prepare plans for mobilising its resources in an emergency.

The Government had recently arranged for the establishment of the aircraft industry on a sound basis and this would be an important adjunct to defence.

As affecting the whole field of defence, great importance was attached by the Australian Delegation to the development of co-operation in defence matters between the several parts of the British Commonwealth.

The Conference was informed that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand also attached the greatest importance to close co-operation in defence matters. The Government were anxious to make sure that expenditure on the three Services was properly balanced and laid out so as best to enable the New Zealand forces to act in the most efficient way possible not only in the local defence of their country but also in Commonwealth defence in co-operation with the forces of other countries of the Commonwealth. In this connection great importance was attached to the Singapore base.

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With regard to the Union of South Africa, it was recalled that matters of principle had been discussed and agreed between the Union Minister for Defence, Mr. Pirow, and United Kingdom Ministers during the visit of Mr. Pirow to London in 1936. South African expenditure on defence had recently been greatly increased, being in the last year nearly three times as much as in 1932-3. An important feature of South African defence organisation was the preparation in peace-time of the industrial resources of the Union to meet possible military requirements in the event of war.

The Conference was informed that the Defence Forces of India are designed primarily to meet a possible attack on the North West Frontier and to cope with the ever-present problem of dealing with the tribesmen in that region, in addition to maintaining internal law and order. It was recognised that the Army in India is fully equipped for these purposes and constitutes a force which is as well prepared as any other to take the field if the occasion arises.

The Conference took note of the measures, recently adopted by the various countries represented at the Conference, often at a heavy cost, and recognised that the increased programmes of armaments were no more than sufficient for the defence of their territories and trade and the fulfilment of such obligations as each might have assumed.

The Conference recognised the vital importance of measures to safeguard maritime communications, including routes and waterways essential to defence and trade, and to provide naval bases and facilities for repairs and fuelling of ships.

The Conference accordingly was glad to be informed that steps have been taken with these ends in view and in particular that substantial progress has been made towards the completion of the naval base at Singapore and its defences, with the aid of the generous financial assistance received from various parts of the Empire.

With regard to land forces, the Conference observed the various duties which the Regular Forces of the United Kingdom and India have performed in protecting British interests and the frequency of the occasions on which it has been necessary to despatch reinforcements to several parts of the world.

The Conference heard with satisfaction of the important steps taken by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom for the maintenance of a Home Defence Air Force of sufficient strength to afford adequate protection against attack by the strongest air force which may be at any time within striking distance of the shores of the United Kingdom. In this connection the Conference took note of the extensive preparations that are

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