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IMPERIAL CONFERENCE, 1937.

DOMINION ASSISTANCE IN THE SUPPLY OF ARMAMENTS AND MUNITIONS OF WAR.

Memorandum for the Imperial Conference, 1937.

1. TWO memoranda have been prepared by the Principal Supply Officers Committee for consideration at the Imperial Conference, 1937, dealing with (a) the general question of the organisation and arrangements made for the supply of war material, both in peace and war, by the Governments of the United Kingdom, the Dominions and India (Paper No. E. (37) 2), and (b) the supply of raw material in time of war (Paper No. E. (37) 9).

2. In the Review of Imperial Defence prepared for the forthcoming Imperial Conference by the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee (Paper No. E. (37) 1), reference was made to the question of Dominion assistance in the supply of war material in the following terms:—

“ 52. In this phase, the belligerent who can maintain and expand her industrial output of munitions of all sorts, would eventually establish a decisive advantage over an enemy whose war potential was less. Although much has been done in the direction of organising industry in this country for the production of armaments in time of war, as indicated in the memorandum by the Principal Supply Officers Committee on the supply of war material, both in peace and war, it is certain that there would be a large gap between our requirements and our capacity, especially in the early stages of a war. Moreover, our arrangements are liable to be dislocated to a considerable extent by air raids. Germany, it is true, would also be exposed to a similar disadvantage, to the extent that her factories lay within range of the bombing aircraft of one or other of the belligerents, which would be considerable in the case of important industries in the Ruhr, Rhine and Saar. Compared, however, with the British Empire, Germany could be placed at a great disadvantage. Factories in Canada and other Dominions would be immune from German attack, and, if they had been developed before the war broke out, might prove a decisive factor in the later phases of any European war. This is one direction in which large-scale co-operation in time of peace could immensely strengthen the resources of the Empire in time of war. Indeed, in view of the embargo by the United States of America, referred to in paragraph 45 above, the availability of additional resources of industrial and armament supplies might well prove vital.”

3. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom fully concur with the above observations, and regard it as a matter of the greatest importance to Imperial Defence that means should be found to give effect as far as possible to the principles stated.

[15196]

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