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ARMY REFORM: THE NECESSITY FOR AN ADVISORY BOARD.

By Major-General C. E. WEBBER, C.B. (ret. R.E.)

Monday, 10th June, 1901.

Captain Sir J. COLOMB, K.C.M.G., M.P. (late R.M.A.), in the Chair.

IN a paper read before this Institution on the 20th February last, I wittingly dealt with three subjects, upon which Army reformers might be invited to dwell.

The first of these refers to some developments in the art of war, arising out of the lessons in warfare of the past century, and the problems that present themselves.

The second deals with the subject of the present paper. And the third with national organisation for Imperial defence.

At the suggestion of your Council, I have the honour to-day to lay before you some considerations as to my second subject, instead of taking them, as I should have preferred, in the above order.

The Establishment of an Advisory Board.—In the above-named paper the establishment of an advisory board was advocated in the following words:—"Until the nation tells Parliament that it must have real efficiency in return for what it pays; until Parliament realises that no professional responsibility is at present possible, and that it cannot be had until an independent board or body to advise them is created, then only can the nation be sure of knowing what is wanted."

Men Available.—Is there any question that we possess men whose lives have given them the necessary experience and who are qualified to consider the military situation in all its aspects, and to advise? Is there any question that our leaders, whether trained in the Navy or Army, have opportunities for gaining practical experience and of applying the same, second to no other nation? Are there not men, whom we could all name, in either

profession, who have given evidence in their career, of the highest qualifications in respect to knowledge, the power of applying it, and of drawing just conclusions for the guidance of a Legislature, as to what it is incumbent on them to do in time of peace, to ensure as far as possible the successful issue of war? And for everyone we could name, is there the least doubt we have many others, who, yet having these qualifications in the fullest degree, have, by the accidents of promotion, been unable publicly to prove their possession?

If made Available.—It will naturally be asked, why do I assert, if this is the case, that the services of public men in every way qualified and ready to render such essential service to their country, are not made available? The only way to pursue the enquiry and to challenge discussion as to its accuracy, seems to be to try and investigate the underlying conditions.

The Amateur Influence Preponderant.—There is perhaps no country in the world in which the opinion and judgment of the amateur on the evidence of the so-called expert are more sought, by means of commissions, committees, enquiries, and through discussions in the papers and journals, and less (in proportion) adopted or made use of.

This is exemplified in the system inaugurated by the Limited Liabilities Acts, by which the existence of boards of directors, mostly amateurs in the work of which they direct the expenditure, relieves the expert, upon whom the administration depends, of the sense of responsibility necessary to secure efficiency.¹

Of course, it is not always so, but millions of money have been wasted by it in civil life.

The reader of the evidence before many enquiries, Parliamentary or otherwise, conducted largely by amateurs, is struck by the waste of time and mystification as to facts, which invariably arises out of the attempt on the part of the various minds in the enquiring body to arrive at the truth; no doubt with the best intentions to elicit and to deal with the evidence appropriate to the subject under enquiry, but generally ending in a report which is chiefly characteristic of compromise.

Herein lies one of the reasons, why, after training men in war, we relegate to the retired unemployed, and to the so-called "fossil" stratum, brains which have reached the period of their greatest value to the State, because, the men who are past-masters of any subject are always the cause of offence to the amateur.

The Vices of a Great Statesman.—At the end of the debate on Wednesday, the 6th March last, in the House of Lords, Lord Salisbury, in summing up, is reported to have said it "always seemed very strange that things which appear evidently to the professional member of very small importance, appear to me to be of considerable importance," and

¹ One does not like to go abroad for an example of common sense, but is there anything more sensible than the German system, by which the highest selected and paid talent is made entirely responsible for the management of the work of joint stock companies, and the (so-called) board of the company meets only periodically to test the results?

vice versâ.¹ He is reported to have added that the Armies of France, or America, or Germany, or Russia, exist under entirely different conditions, namely, that with us "the Army is under Parliament," and that with us "the Minister who controls the Army does it as one who is responsible to Parliament and represents all the authority which Parliament possesses."

In this statement lies, to some extent, the only reply—if it may be called one—to some questions I asked in my previous paper on Army Reform, namely:—"Where does there exist in our Constitution any individual or body charged with responsibility to the nation to advise authoritatively, apart from all questions of party politics, and finance, as to the military (Army and Navy) requirements of the Empire?"

"Can a War Office, ruled by a party Minister, be independent of party politics or considerations, and can the whole truth ever reach the ears of Parliament and of the country through him?"

"Can a so-called Defence Committee composed of civilians, whose minds have never been trained to war, and who exist only by the support of a Parliamentary majority, be trusted for one moment as competent advisers?"

The Wolseley debate this season, in the House of Lords, brings into strong light some of the conditions of our system which must be taken into consideration.²

That debate drew aside for a moment a curtain and exposed a situation from which the country can learn a useful lesson.

We had the late Commander-in-Chief, with knowledge and experience vouchsafed to few, forced by the very circumstances of the position to tell the world, as a Peer of the Realm, that there is no means in this country by which military expert opinion is brought into direct touch with the minds of the people. He was necessarily led on to give practical examples of the effect of this want of continuity, and also to explain how it had affected his actions in the past. On the other hand, we had the exhibition of an able politician brought up in the strictest doctrines of ministerial responsibility, the outcome of a century's practice, defending a position altogether untenable from the common-sense business point of view, and only justified in the same way as so many illogical modes of procedure in this strange country become logical.

¹ Lord Eustace Cecil, in his evidence before the Royal Commission of 1887, said: "It is a very difficult thing to define what is military and what is civil." If he could look upon everything which affects the preparation for war, as military, "the scale would fall from his eyes."

² Lord Wolseley only emphasised the evidence in 1888 before the House of Commons Select Committee of H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge, namely:—"I am only responsible for the estimate of 'what we ask for.' . . . The allocation is dealt with by the Secretary of State, according to what money he thinks he can give. . . . I cannot consider myself responsible for an estimate which might be cut down. . . . I have not the least objection to take any responsibility, but then nobody must interfere with what I put in, if I am to be responsible. . . . If an estimate that is handed in by the Commander-in-Chief goes to the public, and the Secretary of State afterwards thinks it right to modify it . . . then I am quite ready to take the responsibility," etc., etc.

There is no reason to doubt the usefulness of the lesson to be learnt from that debate, because the remedy indicated during its course was difficult—perhaps impossible—of attainment. One thing suggested itself, namely, that the responsibility of the Commander-in-Chief might be expressed in some such terms as those which the late Limited Liability Companies Act has prescribed for the wording of the certificate which the auditors have to attach to the annual balance sheet of a public company. Fancy, the Commander-in-Chief furnishing the Government each year, for submission to Parliament, with a certificate of the offensive and defensive condition of the Empire, which must expose all that is defective; and yet something of the kind is absolutely necessary if there is no other change.

The alternative is to take the public, *i.e.*, Parliament, into your confidence, and the consequent need of an Advisory Board to assist the Legislature.

The Civilian View.—The question of the present civilian influence over the military executive should be approached very tenderly, because most of the civilians who believe they understand an army in war, seriously and honestly believe they do, whereas they only understand one in peace.

Questions in Parliament.—Even the spurious form of so-called patriotism, which induces some Members to ask more or less resultless questions in Parliament, has its useful side. If the man is honest in his desire to learn, he cannot be in a better rough-and-ready school. I do not, of course, include those who only wish to embarrass and make mischief.

Every year the proceedings at "question time" point to the necessity for the country to decide that all questions affecting the defence of the Empire and the economy of our forces, naval and military, should be dealt with *in camera*, *i.e.*, by a Standing Committee assisted by an Advisory Board.

Those who are in earnest, and are not advertising themselves and playing into the hands of the country's enemies, will still obtain all the information they are entitled to have. A large number of serious Members of Parliament, in both Houses, will be enlightened, and even educated, in these all-important questions, and the inducement to give those questions a party character will be reduced to a minimum.

These questions and answers, which must often inspire the members of the combatant forces with indignation, and which do incalculable harm in various ways and little good, would no longer be published in the newspapers.

I would here, with great deference, give one example of the absolute inappropriateness, to say the least of it, of publicity of statements that may fall from the lips even of the highest civilian authority when dealing with purely technical military questions. On 2nd April last the Secretary of State is reported by the *Times* to have said, in reference to the dispensing with Courts of Inquiry—a subject which goes very deeply into the foundation of discipline, *esprit*, and true devotion to duty—"He

was sure the House would support him when he said that the life of any soldier was at the mercy of the officer under whom he was placed, and it was necessary the military authorities should have full power in this respect—namely, to exercise power to dispense with an officer's services without a court of inquiry."

The harm of the discussion lay, not in the desire of Parliament to secure justice in every case for every individual public servant, nor in the explanation of the views of the Secretary of State, but in the fact that next morning everyone could read such a statement in the public papers—a statement which, if his words are interpreted in a military sense, is unprecedented, in the conclusions which may be drawn from it, as to an officer's responsibilities, under conditions which have no parallel in civil life. If the practical Chief of the Army could be relieved of the necessity of making statements in public, the meaning of which cannot be carefully studied beforehand, he (I should say) would be the first to rejoice.

Party Government.—Underlying all the study of my subject is our system of Party Government, which is, after all, an expedient to counteract the evils of human fallibility. I start from the position that we *must* accept this system, however bad its influence may be on the control of a Navy and Army. The whole business is a game. The Defence of our inheritance is too important a matter to be played with.

The amateur element is emphasised. The professional knowledge of the Crown is largely paralysed. The military element in Parliament is uninfluential and relegated to a back seat. Even Lord Wolseley, who is the first member of the House of Lords who, since the Duke of Wellington's time, spoke authoritatively from his seat as a Peer, received more criticism than encouragement.

Seat of Control of the Army.—The only control of the Army that we can identify is the constitutional control of the Secretary of State for War. Since General Peel's time, the average tenure of office by the civilian Secretary of State (Colonel Stanley excepted) has been 2½ years. The Under-Secretary of State and the Financial Secretary cannot have an experience of a more extended kind. Then, on the military side, the Commander-in-Chief, the Adjutant-General, the Quarter-Master-General, the Inspector-General of Fortifications, and the Director-General of Ordnance, are all appointments of five years' duration. It is, therefore, absolutely undeniable that the real control of the Army falls (unavoidably) on the shoulders of the permanent civil officers of the War Department, who are practically irremovable.

Thus, if the Crown and Parliament, on behalf of the Empire (whose servants they are) wish to trace to its seat the real responsibility, they must go to the permanent chairs of the War Office Civil Staff.¹

¹ Mr. Strong's evidence on the War Office in 1887 :—"I think it would be better if an officer remained longer than five years, for no sooner has he got to learn his work well than off he goes, and another staff officer comes in, and then he has to be taught as a matter of course; or, if I am using too great a word in saying 'has to be taught,' has to be put in the right groove by civilians who are permanent."

If it is not easy for the professional soldier to keep always before his mind, as a guide to his procedure in time of peace, the one object for which alone he exists, namely, warfare, how can men who are purely civilian be expected to deal with the military machine, except as one which has to be run in time of peace, so as to ensure economy in the first place, its efficiency or readiness for being put to work under problematical conditions taking the second place?

Civilian and Military Responsibility.—To repeat what I said in my last lecture, I assert emphatically that our Civil Service contains business men second to none in the world; but, if it is required that the sailors and soldiers, who are to be made responsible for the results of warfare and battle, must have limits placed on their personal responsibility in time of peace, then the present system requires the application of a remedy. Some sailors and soldiers, who have not been satisfied to remain amateurs (as too many do under our system), should be the responsible advisers in time of peace in preparing for an eventuality which "only occasionally, and generally suddenly arrives, and which, when it does arrive, appears in a form and from a direction, perhaps, quite different from the one that has been anticipated." Unfortunately, at present we have nothing of the kind.

Provision to Compensate for Difficulty.—Now it is vital to the value of the insurance premiums which the country annually pays, that, if the present system cannot under any form of Government be altered, some compensation should be provided to counteract the effect of the inevitable evil consequences, of which the experiences of the last century give us many and varied examples.

Added to this, it is vital to the safety of the Empire that this provision should include something for which (outside the so-called Defence Committee of the Cabinet) little has as yet been done, namely, a permanent intimate relationship between the Services for the consideration and recommendation of measures which embrace both naval and military conditions.

It is to advocate this compensation, this counter-acting influence, that I am again before the Institution.

To repeat, if the Constitution, as administered by the Crown and Parliament, does not permit of our military forces being placed absolutely under professional control responsible directly and solely for engagement, preparation, training, organisation, execution, and expenditure, as is the case in all other businesses and in ordinary affairs of life, and, as is also the case with the conditions of the position, for instance, of the Sirdar of the Egyptian Army,¹ and largely with the Indian Army;

¹ Our Army system in India is more like the French, namely, a War Minister, who in matters which concern preparations for war, is assisted by a council, which meet once a month, and *must* be consulted by him on certain definite subjects of first importance.

The German system is a good example of the existence of a War Minister, who directs the administration and is responsible for the organisation of the Army, and of whom the General Staff and the Military Cabinet are independent, showing that the existence of independent advice, which has nothing to do with expenditure, need not militate in any way against the efficiency of Army administration, by a Secretary of State for War, associated with a Commander-in-Chief of the King's Forces.

if it is necessary that the Services upon which our existence as an Empire must ultimately depend, must be controlled, directed, and administered, by unprofessional civil permanent servants of the State, then let us have an outside body composed of our greatest, best tried, and proved sailors and soldiers, who shall be :—

- a. Absolutely independent of Parliamentary parties as are the members of the Judicial Bench.
- b. Who shall have nothing to do with administrative or executive (War Office and Admiralty) duties.
- c. Whose duty it shall be to gather and bring within their ken all information as regards our Army and Navy, and all the forces for offence and defence of any part of the Empire, with all about their surroundings, whether existent or possible, and similarly of the forces of other countries.
- d. To study all the conditions and all the possibilities of war within and around the Empire, and, as it were, to live always as if war were imminent and always just beyond the political horizon.

In Presence of Burning Questions.—It is obvious, to anyone who will take the trouble to think, that such a body would be the first to enter the presence of questions, which to many of us, who have always been thinking of these matters, are burning ones.

Further on I will give examples of these questions, how they would impress this advising body, and how that body would deal with them, *vis-à-vis* of the legislature.

Constitution.—There is one thing that must be clear, and that is, that the men who form that body will have spent their lives in the Services, and thus have become perfectly familiar with their working, and that they will have come to appreciate the difference between a day's work in administrative duties full of details arising more out of peace conditions rather than those appertaining to war, and a day (or a week) passed in calm and deep deliberation on subjects fundamental to the military protection of this vast Empire.

Further, they will, in the first place, waste no time in the consideration of that which is unpractical, which is an amiable failing of the amateurs civil and military; and, in the second place, they will have no responsibility for organisation, direction, supervision, or even inspection, unless specially and exceptionally called on to inspect.

I have no hesitation in saying, after many years of watching and studying the daily life of men engaged in the official life of our spending departments, that a large majority rarely have time to ponder seriously, on whether their work is more suitable to times of peace or of war, and still less whether what they are doing is conducing in any way to practical success in warfare. It is not to be wondered at.

Peace Conditions of Army.—Would not an engineering manager and all the employees of a great central electric light station, for instance, get rusty and out of training if after such an establishment had been built and equipped, and even tried on an artificial load and found theoretically

perfect, it had to stand still until, some day, at a moment's notice, the real load was put on, and the supply of electric energy to a widely surrounding district was suddenly started in practice?

Peace Conditions of Navy.—Fortunately for our Navy, their lives are practically passed in battling with the same elements of Nature in peace as in war, the scene of their operations, if warfare breaks out, is the same spherical plane surface and has the same surroundings with which they, in time of peace, are always cultivating a thorough acquaintance.

The unit is the war-ship in its various sizes and classes, and the study of its adaptability and improvement can be always going on.

Conditions in Common.—The modifications of all these conditions, in the case of land warfare, is a study, which alone requires time.

The men composing the advising body, which I have suggested, would be entirely at home in this study, and would be the only safe guides to the nation in considering the area of ground, in common, and not in common, to the two Services, and in laying down the definition of the scope of combinations for securing the most perfect mutual co-operation.¹

I hope I am perfectly understood.—My proposal is the creation of a body which does not at present exist.

It is admitted that such a body may be called a large interference with the existing arrangements for the governing of the Empire. To repeat, it is not that there is any doubt, that the autocratic direction and control of our Navy and Army for purposes of defence and offence, or offence and defence,² whichever you like, subject to the Royal authority and prerogative, is a thousand times the best, but it is certain that in its most practical shape it is impossible with our Constitution or form of Government.

An Expedient.—This new body must be regarded only as an expedient, but still it must be a permanent one—to correct the utter inadaptability of our governmental system to the production of practical results in the preparation for war.³

Our present arrangement is one founded on, and existing on, what we shall always have with us, namely, anti-militarism. It is a system, which, the moment it is in presence of military questions, is utterly at fault, unpractical, extravagant, and unbusinesslike.

¹ This co-operation is, of course, very different from the sort of intercourse which, for instance, exists between the office of the Inspector-General of Fortifications and the Navy for minor and local questions connected with coast defence, by the practice of attaching an experienced naval officer for duty with the fortification side of the War Office.

² I do not like the words "offensive defence," but if I use "defence" only the soldiers think I imply "passive defence." If I use "offence," the peace-at-any-price people misunderstand.

³ There is nothing here which conflicts with Mr. Spenser Wilkinson's words in "The Management of the Home Army," in his "Imperial Defence." "The first requirement of a sound system is a general who can be entrusted with the duty of advising the Cabinet upon the conduct of wars and with the actual management of a campaign. To have such an officer is indispensable, for it is an elementary truth that war cannot be well conducted by a committee."

It has bred up in the minds of our public men a manner of thinking, which was sometimes voiced last year, when one heard the remark, "I suppose we shall blunder through somehow."

It breeds up in the masses of this nation either a spirit of indifference, of a false sense of security, or of passionately helpless indignation: all preludes to a decay of that utilisation of experience and honesty of purpose, of which we have plenty, which alone should guide the leaders, and give confidence to those who follow.

The Colonies and Dependencies.—Another consideration is one which is of far-reaching moment, which is the effect on our colonial fellow-subjects of the way in which the parent countries are profiting by the experiences of the nineteenth century.

The war in South Africa must bring this prominently forward to the minds of these peoples. Once it becomes clearly evident to their legislatures, as it must in time, that the "defensive offence" provided by the parent country is dependent on political questions, and on the existence of a party Cabinet, away must go all confidence in the wisdom and in the efficiency of the arrangements.

Prestige.—If it was not for the prestige of the British Navy and Army the utterances of leading politicians (to say nothing of the independent civil and military faddists) would long ago have destroyed any confidence in the condition of preparedness for war which the Dependencies and the Colonies have imbibed. There is still a conviction that there is backbone somewhere in the United Kingdom. It is maintained largely by the convictions of men, retired from both Services, who are scattered over the Empire, which neutralise the effect on the world of the abjectly weak and inane utterances, to which even the best of our politicians occasionally give utterance in public on military questions.

Danger of Undercutting Prestige.—That generation which has some confidence left must die out, and so far as I can see the rising generation of *thinking* soldiers and sailors who are passing on to the stage of retirement are not so convinced as were those, say, of my time, of the existence of soundness in the foundations of our Imperial armaments. The percentage of such men is on the increase, since the time when one could almost reckon them on one's finger.

Advisers.—The patriotic instincts of any country in the world, whether ruled by monarchical, despotic, democratic, or social institutions, has aimed at the utilisation of the services of sound and experienced advisers. Most of the failures to obtain and use them have been due to the admixture of politics. Still the tribunal to which *these* kingdoms appeal and before which all debatable, vital questions of State *must* come is Parliament. The question is, Are the Parliamentary advisers of the Crown, the best advisers of the Parliament which finds the money?

Peaceful v. Military Administration.—If military (Navy and Army) legislation could be a mere question of policy, through the absence of external influences, there would be no abnormal cause for criticism no more than there is in connection with the civil Government of these realms; but the controlling factor of the existence of external relations

absolutely alters the whole situation. The ordinary process of public debate and of voting, on measures, proposed largely (and unavoidably), subject to party considerations, is fatal, not only to efficiency, but to proper economy of forces and therefore of economy of resources.

Civil Blindness to Military Progress.—The legislator who is also a leader, is inevitably disinclined for party considerations to move with the growth of even surrounding civil conditions, but behind the growth of those military he lags indefinitely. If, on the other hand, he realises and acts as did Mr. Cardwell, he is considered a wonderful military organiser, and in a country like ours, in which the expert counts for so little in the mind of the politician, he, as a clever amateur, is canonised by history, whereas it has probably been only by the accident of his position that he has imbibed convictions from men to whom the whole subject has long been one of common sense.

In all other matters of State, there is not much harm blundering on with our parish system, excellent in its expediency, improving here, and reforming there: but, for the sake of all that we hold dear, let the estates of this realm establish a permanent body, to consult with and to be advised by, on all subjects pertaining to our military safety.¹

Retrospective.—An outcome of the desire to make enquiry at the beginning of the century was the "Commission of Military Enquiry," which sat under the presidency of Major-General H. Oakes from 1806 to 1812. If any steps were taken on their recommendations, there is no record of them. Records of Select Committees of Military Expenditure are found commencing in 1810, 1812, 1817, 1818, 1819, and 1828, most of the recommendations of which had the effect of producing economy, therefore most of the steps recommended were taken. The recommendations of a Select Committee under Lord Ebrington, in 1833, also for the same reason met with the approval of the Treasury. So early as 1837 Lord Howick's Royal Commission, was impressed with the need for consolidation of military responsibility and expenditure, and it was recommended that the Secretary of State for War (the Master-General of the Ordnance being generally a soldier) should be a Cabinet Minister, to take the Royal Pleasure as to the establishment, to be the medium of communication between the Government and the Commander-in-Chief, and to be immediately responsible to Parliament. In fact, the fruits of their report were not reaped till 1856.

Mr. Sidney Herbert's Royal Commission of 1854, on Promotion, is an example of the policy by which an opportunity was given to rising statesmen to become something more than amateurs—in his case a most successful experiment.

1855 and 1856 were distinguished for Lord Monck's Committee on Barracks, Mr. Roebuck's Committee on the Army before Sebastopol,

¹ The late debate on Army Organisation, together with the newspaper articles and notices which it elicited, was a very good example, apart from the merits or demerits of Mr. Brodriek's proposals, of the best conditions under which a Government of these realms can tackle Army reform, and of the literature on the subject with which the nation is supplied. I shall again refer to it.

Sir John McNeil's Committee on Crimean Supplies, and several Select Committees of less importance, but showing the growing interest of the country in the education, sanitation, and equipment, of the Army. That distinguished statesman, Sidney Herbert, in 1858 left his indelible mark on the sanitary condition of the Army and on Army Promotion in time of peace.

Three Hundred Commissions or Committees on the Army.—During the next thirty years—1860 to 1890—the nation may be supposed to have been undergoing a course of instruction in Army matters. In that time, as nearly as possible, 300 Commissions or Committees sat and reported on every conceivable subject connected with His Majesty's land forces only. The wide range covered by these reports, the infinite variety of the matters dealt with, is a monument of industry and includes a vast mass of information which it would require half a lifetime to master. There is not a single subject in connection with the circumstances of an Army in time of peace and its preparation for war that is not dealt with, and as to which, in a large number of cases, there is not material at hand made available, not only to enlighten the general public, but also those whose duty it is to study and take action. As Mr. Mills' Committee of 1861 on Colonial Military Expenditure is instructive for more reasons than one, I shall refer to it in a note further on. The only soldier on it was General Peel, and he absented himself almost entirely from its meetings, and entirely from its divisions, for reasons which are not given.

Committees on War Office Reform.—The War Office has made frequent attempts to get the power to reform itself. I refer to it shortly, more to let my hearers realise that it is a subject which might have to come under the ken of an advisory board, saving the labour and expense of a Commission, supposing Parliament wishes to be again informed concisely as to the merits or demerits of the conduct of business at the Admiralty and War Office.¹

The efforts which the Admiralty and the War Office have made to facilitate internal reform of procedure for the conduct of their business have been numerous; and for this they have not had sufficient credit. In so far as they have failed, it has been largely due to the Treasury drag, while the military departments and not the Treasury are always blamed.²

¹ As a compilation, the report of Mr. Clinton Dawkins' Committee on War Office organisation, which appeared in the *Times* of the 7th inst., is a most useful document; but, in the first place, there is not one single recommendation therein which has not been the subject of former report to the War Office, in some cases many times over; and secondly, recommendations III. and XVII. alone deal with reforms of a kind which might not equally apply to any other of the departments of the Government. Its real value lies in its anticipation of what will be of use when Mr. Brodrick's six small War Offices are established.

² For instance, when Mr. Brodrick's Committee on the Decentralisation of War Office Business, reported in March, 1893, with valuable general recommendations, which were the result of a common-sense review of the mass of detail by which the lower strata of that office (the War Office) are constantly flooded, they had to conclude with the following words, which dealt with the *crux* of the whole question:—"But unless the Treasury will consent to dispense with the control over small matters of expenditure which they now exercise, any large measure of decentralisation of financial responsibility is impossible."

The Treasury.—While at this point let me guard myself against being supposed to try to contradict in any way the valuable and practical evidence of Sir R. Welby and Sir R. Hamilton, in 1887, on the System, of Treasury Control of Army and Navy Expenditure, which, in its right place, is absolutely essential. My hearers will, I hope, appreciate that the independent Advisory Board which I advocate may become a useful tribunal, to which the departments can appeal in case of a dispute in which the Treasury control is tending to produce a harmful result.

The principles laid down by Lord Herbert, in 1860, were given a fuller and more complete development by the recommendations of the Committee appointed "to inquire in 1870 into the arrangements in force for the conduct of business in the Army departments" presided over by Lord Northbrook, and of which Mr. Stansfeld was a member.

The perusal of these and the subsequent reports affords splendid reading for the student, but I doubt if their recommendations, and the honorary—and, to a large extent, amateur—labour they represent, ever produced lasting results. If the whole of the arguments, conclusions, and deductions of these and other committees previous to 1887 were edited, and the successive results of the numerous recommendations made by them that were adopted in part or in whole, or neglected, were classified and tabulated, it would give evidence of the fruitless expenditure of an enormous amount of misdirected and wasted energy,¹ perhaps, only not wasted in the instruction it gave to several distinguished public servants in subjects with which they had not been previously acquainted. Although there is to be found running through the reports founded on these enquiries not infrequent reference to an active condition of war, it is intensely interesting to watch how apparently unable these gentlemen (amateurs in war) were to grasp more than academic views of what warfare really means and how all the work of peace must be subordinated to that eventuality.

In 1887, as soon as we got over the discussions and criticisms to which the Egyptian Expeditions had given rise, a much more vigorous tone is to be found in a series of reports commencing with that of—

¹ In the first Report to Mr. Carlwell of Lord Northbrook's Committee, dated March, 1869, we find reference there made to "two ideal" governing financial controls, one based on a system of distrust, of watching, and checking, the other on the union of finance and administration. The one creating "twin rival antagonistic powers" placing efficiency and economy at war; the expenditure which should be directed solely to secure efficiency tending to degenerate into extravagance, and economy which should check waste resulting in incomplete efficiency; the other ideal recognising the function of finance as that of governing the whole policy of administration, and as forming part of the primary responsibility of the Cabinet. It was sought to guarantee to the Secretary of State, advice, criticism, warning, and control. To do this a Parliamentary officer or Financial Secretary united to the Accountant-General with a Permanent Under-Secretary were recommended. Their second report, dated May, 1869, dealt with a Control Department which was essentially a civilian-minded peace arrangement, and swept aside the recommendation of the soldiers, embodied, for instance, in Lord Strathmairn's Committee on Munitions of War, based on experience in the field.

Their third Report of February, 1870, invaded the Horse Guards' administration, and was well worthy of study, but not of adoption.

Sir J. Fitz J. Stephens' Royal Commission on Warlike Stores.—This Commission (of 1887) discussed the functions and responsibility of the Secretary of State for War in no hesitating terms, and describes him as being: "charged with five separate great functions." My proposal of an "Advisory Board" would entirely relieve him of some portion at least of what the Commission stated "it is morally and physically impossible that any one man should discharge in a satisfactory manner . . . one man could possess either the time or the strength or the knowledge which would be indispensable for that purpose; but even if such a physical and intellectual prodigy were to be found, he would have to do his duty under disadvantages which would reduce him practically to impotence." The result of investing the S. of S. with these extraordinary powers has been "to weaken the whole system . . . prevents the possibility of establishing a consistent and continuous system, destroys responsibility, prevents the public from knowing for what purpose their money is raised and how it is applied." This Commission also observed that "Parliamentary control rests upon a well-instructed public opinion . . . bearing upon a subject . . . capable of being . . . understood. Where a public question . . . is half understood it is often criticised with unjust severity and unwise indulgence." "The first step to be taken is to establish a definite standard to which military administration ought to be regulated, and at which it ought to aim. . . . The different parts of our military and naval system have a relation to each other," and "it is impossible to differentiate between their needs."

That Commission added that "there ought to be no insuperable difficulty in having the whole of this question determined by a Commission of high authority," and in preparing forms "which . . . would show at the beginning of each successive Parliament how matters actually stood." "Over those returns the Secretary of State need have no control." In spite of this, they shied at the real remedy by stating:—"It would of course be quite beyond the province of the Commission to make any suggestions dealing with defects *reaching down to the very roots of the Constitution.*" They give a glimpse of their minds, however, by adding:—"It may, however, be observed that in many branches of the public administration, precautions are taken against defects similar to those just pointed out." For their example they point out:—"The judicial establishment *is wholly independent* of the Executive Government . . . being a service chargeable on the Consolidated Fund."¹

¹ Every line of the report is stamped with the force of a master mind. In its concluding observations the following considerations prevail:—

1. The powers of the Secretary of State for War being so great that no single person can execute them efficiently.
2. The chief of the War Office being practically in the hands of subordinates.
3. The system being directed to no definite object, regulated by no definite rules.

In recommending the revival of the office of Master-General of the Ordnance, with a seven years' certain tenure, they also recommended the formation of a Commission composed of men of the highest eminence and authority to lay down a standard as to the quantities to be maintained of reserves of stores. Apparently, they meant that this Commission should be permanent, as they proposed an annual revision by them. Besides the Commission, they recommended that the Master-General should have a permanent council to advise, to inspect, to adopt, and to investigate complaints.

Can anything be more consistent with that which I advocate?

The Hartington Commission.—As the end of the nineteenth century approached, men's minds began to work up in earnest on the lessons of the past in a manner which was expressed officially in the title of what is known as the Hartington Commission of 1890, appointed to "enquire into the civil and professional administration of the naval and military departments, and the relation of those departments to each other and to the Treasury."

It will perhaps save space if I first point out that the Advisory Board, which I believe to be necessary, does *not* coincide with the only recommendation of the kind — which was more of a suggestion of a fundamental change in the existing system—made by that much-quoted Commission.

The Commission's Proposal.—They just touched on the possible advantage of a "Naval and Military Council," which should probably be presided over by the Prime Minister, and consist of the Parliamentary heads of the two Services, their principal professional advisers, and one or two outside officers of great reputation or experience.¹ The summoning of this Council to be annual, and special only in times of emergency. This is something very different from a standing Advisory Board. Such a Board as I suggest would itself be more competent than the Hartington Commission to deal with and advise Parliament on the subjects which formed the instructions to the latter. There is nothing in the reports of that Commission which could not have been pointed out with much less labour in getting the information together, by a body of men who had spent their lives in the Services. The extraordinary inherent difficulty is what I have before alluded to, namely, that the Parliamentary system engenders the tradition that experts and professional advice are always to be regarded with suspicion.

The need for reforms in "the internal administration of the Admiralty and the War Office," as the evidence of every Commission and Committee since the sixties shows, was equally patent to everyone concerned, and only required, that Parliament should have had a permanent and independent body to look to for advice, probably to have long ago tackled that part of Army reform.

Lord Randolph Churchill's Opinion and Proposals.—As to this we have an opinion of Lord Randolph Churchill in his memorandum of 15th May, 1889, attached to the Reports of the Hartington Commission:—

"Personally, and speaking with some experience and after several years' close study of the House of Commons . . . I have arrived at the conclusion that, eliminating great party issues, the House of Commons with respect to the transaction of ordinary public affairs is an assembly mainly composed of business-like and reasonable individuals, who,

¹ In paragraph 19 of the Report in 1892 of a Special Committee of the Imperial Federation League, this Article (20) on the Report of Lord Hartington's Commission for Defence is quoted. It was suggested that the Council of the Empire, which is the subject of their recommendations, should deal with Imperial Defence somewhat on the lines contemplated by the Commission.

having to find certain funds for certain purposes, desire in the main that the pecuniary demands of Government shall not be obviously excessive, and that fair guarantees should be given for economical expenditure of the funds provided."

This is his statement in view of what he himself, as a member of the Commission, advocated as "a very radical change in our system of naval and military administration." His whole thoughts were concentrated on localising the administration and the responsibility for it on professional chiefs; and he answered the objectors as to "the control of Parliament, the interference of Parliament, the jealousy of Parliament for its rights and privileges," by the above vindication of the common sense of Parliament.

He proposed the abolition of the offices of Secretary of State for War and of the First Lord of the Admiralty, and that they should be replaced by "two Commanders-in-Chief," and that these officers should be members of the Cabinet during their fixed tenure of office for military and naval questions—thus, as he said, keeping "the administration of the Services free from party politics."

"For the purposes of preserving and ensuring financial control, of Parliament, and of the Government"—two somewhat different things, by the way—he proposed to create in addition "the office of Secretary of State and Treasurer for the Sea and Land Forces of the Crown."

He added:—"The three would examine in concert the general requirements of Imperial defence." He claimed, not only that "direct personal responsibility" would be fixed, "but also that the control of Parliament, far from being diminished," would be "considerably increased and made much more effective."

There is no doubt that Lord Randolph had the common-sense businesslike view—unfortunately unattainable—before him. The Commission, under the influence of tradition, better able to judge of what is attainable, sums it up thus:—"While it is possible that Parliament might be disposed to accept in principle a system intended to place such responsibility on professional Ministers, who would not necessarily have seats in Parliament at all, and would certainly not be Members of the House of Commons, we doubt whether this result" (*i.e.*, direct professional responsibility) "could be practically attained."

A question before the nation now is, whether an object that impressed itself on that Royal Commission of 1889-90 has been achieved, namely:—

Are we possessed of a system in which the "two departments" act as one, namely:—

1. For the defence of the United Kingdom, its Colonies, and Dependencies, and the protection of its commerce, supplies of food, and other necessities?
2. For the organisation of the naval and military strength of the Empire, with a view to the conduct of any hostile operations against foreign Powers in which the policy of the country may cause it to be engaged?

The Hartington Commission, having presumably studied the reports of previous Commissions and Committees, and, believing that "a question of principle is involved, which no attempt had been made to solve," supports the statements, "that no combined plan of operations for the defence of the Empire in any given contingency has ever been worked out or decided upon." It is a further question. Were we, and, if so, how far, nearer in 1899 (before the South African rebellion broke out) to the accomplishment of the objects the Commission had fundamentally in view?

In the last ten years the Commissions and Committees have been fewer in proportion, but they are all remarkable for one thing, and that is, that the steps taken in consequence of the reports made by distinguished Chairmen and Presidents and their no less distinguished members have not represented *nearly* 5 per cent. of the recommendations. For instance, of the 77 recommendations of Lord Wantage's Committee of 1892 on "Terms and Conditions of Service in the Army," only one became the subject of an Army Order.

The Cabinet and the Army and Navy.—A very able writer,¹ of quite recent time, in his chapter on "The Cabinet and the Army and Navy," describes a combination for consultation, which is essential to success, *if war is on the horizon*, thus:—"The admiral, the general, and the statesman must not only have compared notes, but have entered fully into one another's minds, before the decision to have recourse to force can safely be made." The trained naval and military judgment co-operating in the inquiry will be subject to "the judgment of a statesman to answer the inquiry whether a projected series of naval and military victories can be used to compel a foreign Government to agree to specific conditions of peace."

He adds:—"The moment the decision has been made, and war has been determined upon, the Cabinet is obliged to rely for the execution of its policy upon generals and admirals."

But all this deals with a possible critical time (which is the exception), when peace and war are hanging in the balance, and not with ordinary times of peace (which is the rule).

If, as Mr. Spenser Wilkinson's views suggest, our First Lord of the Admiralty and Secretary of State for War could be appointments *quam diu si bene se gesserit*, they would be transferred from Cabinet to Cabinet, and the immediate military² advisers of the Cabinet would be their chief executive officers, the First Sea Lord and the Commander-in-Chief. Tangible responsibility would then be secured, and "the settlement of the standard of naval and military preparations" could be safely left to these, and the "combination between the two Services, which is the essence of defence," would be secured.

The Army and Navy Estimates, which "lay the foundation of preparation for every eventuality of war," would not then be subject to party

¹ Mr. Spenser Wilkinson.

² The word "military" generally in this paper includes the work of Navy and Army separately or combined.

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exigencies, because those Estimates would be prepared and submitted to Parliament by men whose positions are not changed by a party vote on questions with which their responsibilities have nothing to do.

The question is, Would this plan be accepted by those "who fear that by," such an "arrangement the authority or importance of the Cabinet Ministers," whose place depends on party voting, "would be diminished"? There can be little doubt that it would be vigorously and successfully opposed.

The alternative, I repeat, can only be found in an "advisory professional board," to whose advice Parliament can have direct access.

To the mind trained in Parliamentary life the permanence of the board and its having the power of initiating advice might be regarded as a source of weakness, whereas the professional mind will see in it the source of strength, in which the situation has always and will ever, under the present system, be deficient.

Our Meeting of 20th February, 1901.—The expression "Advisory Board" may be objectionable to some who have studied the subject. Such a body as that which I am advocating might be called a "High Military Commission."

On the last occasion that I addressed an audience in this room, I stated that :—"I could quite understand that our legislators . . . view with suspicion the suggestion of being advised . . . it is very difficult for them to realise that they *can* get at the truth without conflicting evidence as to fact. They are so accustomed to expect only part of the truth on any subject from the Government in office, that they do not believe that any board of professional men could be brought together whom they could depend on for advice."

Sir Charles Dilke, M.P.—On that occasion, although I tried to make myself understood, Sir Charles Dilke did not realise, that the future between the Services and Parliament which I described, would not affect the administrative procedure, but that Parliament would be brought into immediate touch with great questions of policy, as regards which it cannot now trust the sources of information to be dependent of mere party considerations. Sir Charles asked, "What does he (Webber) mean?" Can he (Dilke) deny that this factor, namely, the absence of information, affects the way in which Parliament deals with all questions of policy? That he has ever quite realised its crippling effect, I doubt. As Colonel Vetch remarked, "He has not attempted to meet the difficulty on account of which General Webber's Advisory Board was proposed."

That, Sir Charles Dilke has not been able to localise the gap which the experience of the last century, I contend, proves to exist in our military organisation in time of peace, is, I think, shown by one remark on that occasion :—"I do not see how it would be possible for the House of Commons . . . to take so enormous a branch of the national affairs out of the hands of the Government . . . and deal with it without regard to the Admiralty : . . . or to the War Office." If the explanations of my proposals were so defective as to give the impression

to Sir Charles that I meant anything of the kind, then I can understand the suspicion expressed by one of the audience that I "did not mean to be taken seriously."

Colonel Vetch "considers such a Board quite impracticable," but at the same time asked, "How are you to get the views of the Commander-in-Chief properly communicated to the House of Commons . . . How is the country to know that the Estimates presented to it do not represent the real requirements of the Services?" *Colonel Vetch* further admits the urgency of my contention by these words:—"For myself, I see no practicable way of doing it as long as we have party Government in England and so long as the Services are dealt with on party lines."

Colonel Sandys, M.P.—Again, *Colonel Sandys'* wish to administer the Army like the Navy, by a Board composed chiefly of the profession, does not affect my proposal, which is in no way designed to interfere with the training and working of the naval and military machines, or with the financial or administrative responsibility of the First Lord, and of the Secretary of State for War.²

All the discussion as to the relative positions and responsibilities of the Commander-in-Chief, as of the Sea Lords, and the heads of the great departments, is beside the question. Whether these form advisory or consultative boards to their Parliamentary chiefs is all a question of interior economy, for the purpose of maintaining the highest efficiency and of producing the best results in the departmental machinery.

Colonel Sandys spoke of an annual report by the Commander-in-Chief to be submitted to the Secretary of State for War, who would lay it before Parliament. He took it that this would cover my Advisory Board, which, in spite of my description of the Board's constitution, he suggests would have to be "got together in a hurried way."

His "picked" Commander-in-Chief with "picked" advisers (men holding temporary appointments) would continue to report to the Cabinet through the Secretary of State, who is a civilian, holding an appointment, which is precarious in its duration.

Captain Jessel, M.P., looked below the mark. He pointed to an existing board, composed of the Commander-in-Chief, the Adjutant-General, the Quarter-Master-General, the Director-General of Artillery, and the Inspector-General of Fortifications, and proposed its re-organisation. This is very much what was done by the Order in Council of 1895, to which the late Commander-in-Chief has objected from his seat in Parliament. Nothing that I recommended can be taken to affect the

¹ *Colonel Vetch* also referred to a subject which is of much interest and which was first formulated in the "Report of a Special Committee" (see also previous note) of which *Lord Brassey* was Chairman, of the Imperial Federation League. This report went carefully into the question of the formation of a Council of the Empire to consist of members to be appointed by the United Kingdom and by the self-governing Colonies. India and the Crown Colonies to be represented through the Secretaries of State, to deal with Imperial Defence.

² See No. XIX. of the recommendations of Mr. *Clinton Dawkins'* Committee (which reported in May last) as to a "War Office Board."

advantage or otherwise of such a re-organisation. Nor have I referred to the relations between the First Lord of the Admiralty and the other Lords as to the direction of the Navy. On the contrary, I have expressly stated that my Advisory Board must have "nothing to do with administrative or executive duties."

Sir Henry Hoare thought that I advocated "a Consultative Committee to assist the Commander-in-Chief with its advice."

Nothing of the kind. Whether the Commander-in-Chief is the Sovereign or a field-marshal, my Advisory Board in no way clashes with his functions of command.

In my reply in the debate of the 20th February I made it, I think, perfectly clear that there was no doubt in my mind that under the *best* conditions the Commander-in-Chief of an Army in peace, as well as in war, should, if possible be an autocrat. Do the objectors deny that with us it is impossible, and that "the idea is repulsive to all our institutions and would not be accepted for a moment"?

My distinguished Chairman (*Sir John Colomb, M.P.*), after going astray in quoting me, by suggesting that the Advisory "Council" (he calls it) would simply deprive of responsibility those who must be responsible for the government and expenditure of the country, in his concluding remarks could give no more hope of remedy than that he "did not despair of finding . . . a way of getting out of the want of continuity of policy, and the pursuance of principle in our naval and military arrangements, as time goes on."

Existence of a Gap.—If the discussion on that part of my paper of 20th February, with which we are dealing to-day, has led to the admission of the existence of a gap, which it is vital should be filled up, I have gone a long way towards proving my contentions. I can be fairly asked to give examples proving its existence in the past, and also examples of the way in which it was disadvantageous, and some instances in which the mishaps or miscarriages which actually took place, would have been avoided if such a Board had existed and its counsel had been attended to.

Advisers and Advised.—There are many members of the Service, with long experience in Parliament, whom I ask to bear with me, if I make some suggestions as to how the arrangements I have foreshadowed may be brought into operation.

The existence of an Advisory Board means *advisers and advised*; it also means the presence of a demand for advice on certain subjects. The contention in this paper is, not that excellent advice on the conditions of the offensive defence of the Empire is absent or unavailable, only, that it is neither collected nor collated in the most efficient way, and, that it does not find its way to the matrix where its incubation would produce results most useful to the nation.

As things have existed in the past, there is nothing to ensure as regards the advice, that it emanates from the collective deliberation of the most experienced, proved, and trained intellects, which the two professions, Navy and Army, can produce, under the conditions of continuity and independence which have been already described.

Parliament.—As regards the reception and consideration of advice on matters essential to the stability of the Empire, there is but one body which is competent under our Constitution to take or withhold action which will move the Crown to enact, and that body is Parliament.

It is sometimes said that in Parliament there is no neutral element, and that, in consequence, you cannot there get neutral consideration of advice. It is said that the nominations to any committee—not a Private Bill Committee—is entirely a question between the Whips of the provision of sufficient representation of each party. Now, is this entirely the case? Can there be no independence in the deliberations of a Joint Standing Committee of the two Houses?

It is true that Standing Committees, such, for instance, as the Committee on Public Accounts, are exceptional, and Joint Standing Committees are rare. Since 1864 there have been several Joint Committees which have been very successful in usefulness when one inquiry, common to both Houses, has been required. On such committees the representation has been equal, and they have had power to join in the appointment of a Chairman. Each House is accustomed to have Standing or Sessional Select Committees, which deal with (for instance) privilege, journals, appeals, standing orders, and such-like matters. The Committee on Railway and Canal legislation is practically a Standing Joint Committee.

That Parliament is quite ready to adopt novel procedure is proved by the reports from the Select Committee on the Army Estimates of 1888. The Committee (Lord Randolph Churchill's) was told to "examine into the Army Estimates and to report their observations thereon." There were seventeen members, and they issued five reports. They took evidence on nearly all the twenty-four votes, in the Estimate, and examined between thirty and forty witnesses. Only one member of the Committee, Sir William Crossman, had had any practical professional experience of some of the matters into which they enquired. Mr. Childers and Mr. Edward Stanhope had been War Ministers, and Sir Frederick FitzWygram had been a cavalry officer. A careful study of the proceedings has left me with the following convictions:—

1. That the procedure was a departure as new as it was radical.
2. That it was not repeated because it proved to be far more extensive and elaborate than was expected.
3. That it would have been a much easier task and would have required the taking of much less evidence if the Committee had been assisted by an Advisory Board.
4. That if it had been a Standing Committee with such assistance the repetition of its work in each successive year would have been still easier.
5. That after each year its observations would have been more practical, therefore more useful and much more authoritative.

Secrecy.—If it is the opinion of Parliament that secrecy ought to be maintained, there is precedent for the conduct of proceedings of

committees with closed doors. Parliament can define the numbers of a committee, and nominate or decide, if it will, to appoint by ballot all or any of the members. It might be said that it would be very difficult to secure any real secrecy as to the deliberations of the committee and as to the advice given to it by the Advisory Board. But, in the first place, it should be borne in mind that there is nothing, which is worth knowing as regards an Army, is not known and thoroughly understood in every first-class War Office in Europe; and that, in the second place, the few things like inventions in *matériel* of war, which it is vital should be kept secret for a while, are, in fact, only known to a very few of the officials who make and use them, and that with the technical merits of these inventions an Advisory Board would have nothing to do. Again, although occasionally the deliberations of the committee might leak out in the Press, the weak places where these leaks occur would, in course of time, become automatically closed.¹

Lastly, in time of danger, the risk from traitorous betrayal of information, which it would be of vital importance to keep secret, would be eliminated, because at such a time the Advisory Board's peace functions would have been supplanted by the war executive.

Joint Committees have all the powers—and more, because they can move an address—of Select Committees of each House.

Report from Time to Time.—To such a committee Parliament can grant leave to report from time to time; and it is usual (when it is necessary) for Parliament to refer the reports of such committees, with or without evidence, for the consideration of His Majesty's Government. Addresses upon any subject connected with the Government or welfare of the country emanating from such committees, with the leave of Parliament, may be presented to the Sovereign through His advisers for the time being. Similarly, resolutions emanating from the same source, and under the same conditions, may be communicated through the same channel to the First Estate. For the above reasons it is contended that there actually exists in Parliamentary traditions and procedure, as well as all the precedents required to justify a standing arrangement, such as I have attempted to describe.

A real Defence Committee.—To repeat, the arrangement is the appointment of a Standing Joint Committee on the "offensive defence" of the Empire. What, then, would be their relations with the proposed Advisory Board and with His Majesty's Government respectively? A precedent for the admission of permanent servants of the Crown to the deliberations of a Parliamentary Committee already exists in the persons of the Lord Chief Justice and of the Judges, who may be brought into consultation with committees of the House of Lords.² If such an association in com-

¹ One of the demands of Sir James Stephens' Commission of 1887 was for "system and publicity." With reference to the question of "secrecy," the report added, that "Foreign countries already know all that they care to know about our . . . Army and Navy."

² They stand, or sit on "stools without backs to them," according to "Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice."

mittee is possible in one case, it requires a good deal of explanation to show why it should not be consistent in another. If the Committee were, for example, to consist of five members of each House, and the Advisory Board of five members of the two Services, their total number of fifteen would not be unmanageable. Besides, the Committee would sit by itself and only require the attendance of the Board, either in consultation or to receive proffered advisory reports, and the members of the Board would have no votes.

Insurance of Confidence.—Would the deliberations and consultations with the Advisory Board and the reports of the Joint Committee disturb the harmony of the relations between, or affect the confidence of, either the Crown or Parliament, in the Cabinet for the time being? Rather, would not the removal of elements, which often have affected and sometimes destroyed that confidence, be an advantage? And is there any question that the confidence of the peoples of this Empire in the manner of considering and enacting on such matters would be largely increased?

Again, is there not a great deal in the effect which a dispassionate consideration of the subject of "offensive defence," in touch with the best experience to be had, devoted to no other duty, would have on the minds of members of both Houses, who had the good fortune to be nominated as members of the proposed Joint Committee?

And lastly, would not the vital nature of the subjects to be considered have a great effect on the manner in which the public would regard the appointments not only to the Advisory Board, but also to the Committee itself, and on the degree of satisfaction and contentment thus properly engendered? And would not there gradually be withdrawn from publicity many matters, the ventilation of which, in the way it is done at present, is a source of danger to the State, not from the point of view of betrayal of information, so much as on account of the misunderstanding on the part of the public to which inaccurate statements give rise?

Suggestions.—When considering the nature of the questions as regards which a Standing Committee of Parliament would require advice from an Advisory Board, those matters which are immediately connected with the administration, order, and regulation, of the Services, would naturally be excluded. The supremacy of the Royal prerogative would be untouched.

The only executive portions of the present Admiralty and War Office administration of which the allegiance should be transferred to the Advisory Board would be the—

Intelligence Departments.—At present the duties laid down for those departments is to collect and collate, but to give no opinion, at least officially. The chiefs of the War Office and of the Admiralty would thereafter be spared all the labour of digesting the information, and the responsibility of deciding on the use to which it should be put.

This would entirely devolve on the Advisory Board, whose standing duty would be to collect, record, collate, and distribute, all the information with which each department and branch of the Services should be supplied. Whenever such information, say, as regards the armament of Continental Armies, pointed to the need for a new departure in matters of policy, the

motive for that departure would spring from the body whose chief duty it would be to dwell continually on questions of professional and technical organic change.¹

The Cabinet.—When the Cabinet required advice as to the suitability of standing armaments to meet a political contingency that might arise, it would not be with the chiefs of the executive of the sea and land forces, but with the Advisory Board (who would regard the conditions with an independent mind) that they would consult.

For example, there can be no possible question that such a Board would have had no hesitation in 1899 to tell the Government the truth about South African warfare, and what they would have said would have been "that an organisation designed to meet a European foe in a civilised country, as was that of our Army, was in most ways unsuitable for an encounter with a swarm of mounted riflemen, in a vast unenclosed area, of which the features, both natural and artificial, have little resemblance to the surface of Europe."

The Estimates.—The question of the consideration of the annual Estimates of each year by a Standing Parliamentary Joint Committee (as in France) is one which I have already mentioned in connection with the Committee of 1888. Evidently the chiefs of the Army would have the best advice of the naval and military heads of the Admiralty and of the War Office Departments and of the admirals and generals commanding large units of command in the preparation of their proposals, and their professional views would have great weight; but, as they would not be on matters of high policy, there need be very little clashing between the Advisory Board and the admirals and generals in active employment. To guard the privileges of the Commons, the "instructions" should state that reports on the Estimates must emanate from the members belonging to the Lower House.

Mr. Brodrick's Scheme.—I may be asked, What is the use of discussing, as a matter of Army reform, the necessity of an Advisory Board, after the ability shown by the present Secretary of State for War in acting on the advice at his disposal and in devising such a scheme as he submitted to Parliament and described to the House of Commons on the 16th May? More particularly as he is reported to have said on the 1st May:—"He was willing to face any degree of unpopularity, but, if he did so, it would be with the Commander-in-Chief at his back, and he would never be afraid to ask the House of Commons for the funds necessary to fulfil the functions which the country had committed to his care."

Without detracting in any way from the genius displayed in the physiology of the skeleton—to use the author's own simile—and

¹ It should be understood that an Intelligence Department in time of peace is a collecting and digesting bureau, and that its work has very little resemblance to the duties of the Intelligence Officer of an army in the field. If war broke out, the Intelligence Office which had been created in time of peace must not be crippled to find officers for the department in the field, or at sea. The system of attaching staff officers for training in time of peace need not be discontinued.

without anticipating any defects in the flesh and blood with which he proposes to cover the skeleton, we have only to remember that in the past, few schemes of Army reform that have been introduced by an able and brilliant and convincing speech have been carried out by the speaker's successor on the lines which were laid down, and that still the call for Army reform, whether rightly or wrongly, goes on.¹

Each Secretary of State's fallibility has been emphasised, no matter how able he may be, by the conditions of his tenure of office; the good things he has done have been too often allowed to die out, if they run counter to later policies or to the views as to retrenchment of the Minister who may succeed him. There is at present no permanent body whose duty it is to comment on, or approve, and support, wise measures, and to watch and safeguard policies which, once adopted as sound, should not be exposed to the probability of being reversed under conditions such as those so fully declared in the utterances of Mr. Brodrick's opponents.

One important duty of an Advisory Board would therefore be to watch the indications of decadence, and falling away of purpose in the working of the Services, and to report and expose it to the Standing Parliamentary Defence Committee, upon whom, then, would devolve the duty of exposing the situation.

Before concluding, may I be allowed to mention a few matters which are waiting consideration?

Strategical and Tactical Problems.—In the paper I read here on the 20th February I ventured to deal with questions connected with the organisation of armies, and their handling, under modern conditions, which require careful attention. These would be the first subject of study for the proposed Board.

Naval Changes.—Not only are great changes in the practice of land warfare looming in the future, but also, if not more so, in warfare at sea is science giving indications that much upon which vast sums of money has been spent will have sooner or later to be "scrapped." With the great engineering ability in the employment of the Admiralty there is no question of interference by any outside body, and fortunately only in very

¹ If the urgency of Army reform, as to which the present Government received the support of the constituencies, had been last year less accentuated by the previous existence of an Advisory Board, which would have been gradually in the past working at reform, Mr. Brodrick's task would have been much easier than it is, and by the permanent existence of such a Board there would be less risk in the future in case he were to disappear, of a departure from the policy which it is clear must be followed for a long time to bring his scheme to perfection.

If that scheme, to which, we are told, the Commander-in-Chief gave his entire adhesion, could have been laid before an Advisory Board, and explained by that Board to a Joint Standing Committee, would it have been any the worse for such a scrutiny? Would not the country have been more satisfied? And would not the debates in Parliament be shorter and more to the purpose, if after the endorsement of the Committee anything was left to debate? And above all things, should we not be spared the ever-present qualification of so many great measures, that should be non-political, namely, that they are "experimental"?

rare cases has the country had evidence of want of judgment or continuity of policy on the lines laid down by those who have to decide. Still there is room for earnest examination as to whether that policy is as carefully thought out, in view of the future of naval warfare, as is indicated by the signs of the times. Herein lies one province of an Advisory Board.

Recruiting.—There is no subject which gives rise to so many conflicting statements and opinions as that of the recruiting of the various branches of our voluntary Service. These are rarely viewed as a whole; there is no body whose duty it is; to keep its hand on the pulse, as it were, of the nation, as to the question of demand and supply; to weigh the policies which affect what might be called the competition for able-bodied men to make them into sailors and soldiers.

For instance, it is very necessary that the nation should be authoritatively informed as to the economical side of the question in regard to the enlistment of lads at eighteen. We resent being presented with a strength of the Regular Army which includes 60,000 lads; but we should not resent it if it was understood that these were *cadets* or recruits under training, outside that strength, and that after they had each cost, during the two years, £84 a year, or a total of £168, they would at 20, when they "come on to the strength," be thoroughly trained efficient. What we require to be assured is, how much more those 60,000 will be worth when they have attained 21 years and completed their 3 years' service, than the man enlisted at 20 years of age (to whom 2s. 6d. a day would have to be given if he is in employment as an able-bodied labourer), who will, at 21, have cost £124 or more than half that amount. Besides, a careful estimation of values would take into account the social advantage to the community of bringing these same lads under discipline at the age of 18.

Generally the Commissions or Committees which sit on recruiting questions, of necessity deal with only one branch of the public service, and the reports for that reason are always uninformative or inconclusive, and generally only lead up to recommendations which have long been matters of common knowledge.

No interference with the actual work of recruiting on the part of the Advisory Body would ensue, but the whole subject would be under permanent observation, and the necessity for new measures of policy being considered by Parliament would be promptly acted upon.

Training and Manœuvring.—In the paper I read here on 20th February last I made some strongly-worded remarks on the fact that those who are trained for war in these islands never have the opportunity of being exercised over the natural and artificial features of the type of surface which forms 90 per cent. of the surface of these Kingdoms.

Is it to be supposed that if there had been an Advisory Board, whose duty it was to urge on the country the neglect of our military administrators to insist on the absolute necessity of such means of training, such negligence would not have been exposed and its effects corrected long ago by the passing of a proper Manœuvres Act, and, what is more, would

not the necessary provision in equipment, clothing, and for the use of enclosed areas by troops under training, and the consequent wear and tear, have had to be faced?¹

Food and Fuel Supply.—Amongst the many subjects which require careful study are the food supply and the protection of the coal supply of the Empire, not only of these Kingdoms but of the Colonies. It is true that these subjects form matter for a large amount of writing in the newspapers and magazines, but it is equally true that there is no nucleus for the official careful consideration of such questions from the point of view of what should be attempted and gradually brought about by legislation initiated by a Standing Joint Defence Committee acting under the permanent influence of an Advisory Board constituted for such a purpose.²

Colonial Defence.—It may be said without undue bias that the surface of the whole question of preparation and mobilisation of what is called colonial defence has only been touched. Occasionally able officers have devoted their attention to the conditions of "offensive defence" in the Pacific Ocean in the event of a great European war, in which we might be involved. Can anyone say that these studies find their way to any place where they are read even with interest, or that any positive advantage, except by chance, is likely to be derived from them?

It is to be hoped that the *fetish*, of comparing the conduct of "military" affairs in time of peace for the eventuality of war, in the words of the instruction to the last Committee, namely, "to report on amendments of procedure. . . . which would bring the work of the War Office more into harmony with that of large business undertakings,"

¹ It is over thirty years since I lectured to military students showing how columns of all arms should move along more or less straight lines across enclosed countries like that which constitutes by far the greatest portion of the areas of these kingdoms, in order to leave the roads to the heavy wheeled traffic of an Army. I laid out on the ground very many of such lines between the south and east coasts and the metropolis, and compiled and gave the practical details of the engineer work required to clear the necessary gaps in the fences and to fill up ditches and watercourses (about seven to a mile). These problems, though known to every War Office in Europe, are, I fear, still quite overlooked by our military engineers, simply because it is nobody's business to require their study in connection with invasion.

It is not many days since it was reported in the newspapers that a number of mounted officers had been riding over the country round London, and had come to the conclusion that cavalry, as we understand cavalry, could not scout or manœuvre over it except on the roads. In other words, that, as a screen, or as scouts, or in battle, they would be no use! The marvel is how so self-evident a problem was not observed before. (See my lecture on this on 20th February last, in the April JOURNAL.)

² I do not think that it has been thought of, but a raid on the South Wales coast on a large scale, if we were at war, could be made the means of causing serious and protracted injury to our best sources of coal supply for the Navy. Nor do I believe that the necessary precautions have been made a matter of study, or how far a Volunteer movement among the coal miners, if for the object of defending the mines, would succeed. (See, Captain S. L. Murray, "Our Food Supply, etc.," p. 656 of the JOURNAL, June, 1901.)

would, under the influence of an Advisory Board, become better understood and exposed.

Before finishing, permit me to digress a little.

Mr. Mills' Committee of 1861 on Colonial Expenditure.—The inquiry itself turned chiefly on the fact, *then existing*, namely, that in some of the oldest, most numerous, most prosperous, and most energetic of our Colonies "not one farthing was expended or one man raised and trained for the defence of their own lives and properties against foreign enemies," and notwithstanding the fact that the Colonies of all other nations, ancient and modern (and English Colonies till we quarrelled with America) have either defended themselves or paid their full share of the expenses of the common defence." (Godley.)

The turn which the inquiry and the report took is curiously confirmatory of the inability of the statesman's mind to unravel unaided the effect of apparently conflicting expert evidence in connection with "military" questions, and to collaborate or put it together or come to scientific conclusions on the great questions of the offensive defence of the Empire.¹ It is not to be wondered at—in spite of the great names in the lists of those who inquired and of those who gave evidence—that the reductions and economies which clearly were the motive for the inquiry, were the only matters which interested those called on to report. Lord Herbert of Lea gave the key to this when he stated that he would alter the policy of the past, and "should accumulate all the forces that it is possible to accumulate at home, and keep as few men as possible in the Colonies."

Here we had the House of Commons the recipients of a report, the influence of which helped to guide the policy of the last half of the nineteenth century, a report which was sound, no doubt, from the purely financial point of view, but which, at the same time, obscured every issue except that of non-militarism. A Standing Joint Committee would

¹ The questions put to Rear-Admiral Erskine, for instance, were to get him to show that a sea defence of the Colonies was less costly than one on land, and thus the value of that part of his evidence which was based on the greater mobility of the sea unit as compared with the land unit was thrown away. When we come to the examination of Sir John Burgoyne, we find that all his evidence is subject to the condition that England "might probably lose the command—say, of the Indian Ocean—for weeks and months together." In other words, that command of all the seas, or only of some of the seas, are alternatives which present different problems. The Committee was of opinion "that the multiplication of fortified places, and the erection of fortifications in distant Colonial possessions . . . involved useless expenditure . . . and failed to provide an efficient protection for places the defence of which mainly depends on superiority at sea." Also, in adopting the view "that the tendency of modern warfare is to strike blows at the heart of a hostile Power," they drew the conclusion that "it is desirable to concentrate the troops required for the defence of the United Kingdom," and to trust the defence of "distant Dependencies" to naval supremacy. In viewing the situation from only one standpoint, namely, that of finance, they seem to have been unable to imagine a state of war, when the Colonies as part of the Empire, might be supposed to feel that the fortification of Melbourne or Quebec might be of equal importance to the inhabitants of those places as, say, that of London may be to the 6,000,000 who form its population.

approach this subject, doubtless, under a similar instruction from Parliament, namely, to reduce the financial burthens on the United Kingdom, but, if it was assisted by an Advisory Board, it would deal with the "offensive defence" of the Empire as a whole and the report would cover the whole ground.

If there is one thing which the country feels it wants, it is some tribunal of ultimate appeal as to "who is to blame?" "who has blundered?" If it is possible, could there be a fairer or more competent one than the Committee, assisted by assessors taken from the Advisory Board?

The question I have had the honour to bring before my audience is one that I am hopeful they will not dismiss without weighing it carefully. I do not think that any practical attempt has ever been made to attack at their foundation the evils which clearly exist. The nation and peoples of this Empire can easily understand the reasons for my proposals from one point of view, because they can realise that at present there is no tribunal for placing the responsibility for failure on the right shoulders. The Legislature and the officials are fully aware of all that I have laid before you, and are fully competent to weigh my proposals in the balance; but in this case, if they cannot reconcile them with existing arrangements, or, if they cannot modify those arrangements to dovetail into my proposal, then it is certain an increased and ever-increasing responsibility of the gravest kind will rest on them in the future.

Colonel R. H. VETCH, C.B. (late R.E.):—I am sure we are all very much indebted to the lecturer for again bringing this important subject before us, and so giving us an opportunity of once more considering whether it be possible to find any remedy for the existing state of affairs. On the previous occasion, I do not think the difficulty, which General Webber proposed to meet by an Advisory Board, was altogether understood or appreciated. But having now elaborated his views, and given us more detail, we are in a better position perhaps to discuss the proposal. Before, however, I make any observations on the subject of the lecture, I hope General Webber will pardon me if I venture to make a verbal criticism and enter a strong protest against the expression he uses—*offensive defence*. I have noticed its use lately in reviews and magazine articles, and am at a loss to conceive the object of such ugly tautology. It seems to me, if you will forgive a pun, that it is an *offensive* expression. The word *defence* is a good word with a broad meaning which everyone understands, and includes all that is necessary. It means hard-hitting as well as warding off blows. The *defence* of the Empire is a very well understood term, and provides for the safeguarding of the Empire in every possible way, whether by hitting out, or by warding off blows. So when we talk of "the noble art of self-defence" we do not preclude the giving of knock-down blows as well as the warding them off. No one, I am sure, would venture to speak of the noble art of offensive self-defence. The military use of the word *offence* is a very narrow one, denoting the blow, as opposed to the guard, the forward movement as opposed to the stand, the active as opposed to the passive. Therefore, I think, we may be very well content with the word *defence*.¹ To go now to the subject of the lecture, may I dwell for a moment upon the real difficulty that exists? The lecturer calls it a gap, I should rather call it a fundamental weakness. It is that there is at present no way of placing before the country the real and true

¹ To balance this hostile criticism, I congratulate General Webber on his use of the word *military* in its old wide sense of pertaining to war, whether by land or sea.—R. H. V.

requirements for its protection, and of keeping them in view of everyone. This difficulty is a very serious one. Take, for instance, the very broad-minded measures which were introduced by Mr. Cardwell, the War Minister of the early sixties, who was advised by a committee—one of the 300 of which the lecturer has told us—one of the most important Committees that has ever sat at the War Office, I mean the Localisation Committee. It was presided over by a very able administrator and organiser, Sir Patrick Macdougall, whose name was well known in those days in this Institution, and upon it also sat Lord Wolseley, then a colonel fresh from the Red River Expedition. That Committee proposed the system of linked battalions—two battalions were to be linked together with a common depôt, one of the battalions to be always at home and the other abroad—a very statesmanlike system, which was approved and adopted, but in a few years got quite out of joint. Why? The necessities of the Service required more battalions abroad, no money was forthcoming to raise new battalions, consequently the system was completely dislocated and the linked battalions were often abroad together. It was not until quite recently that sufficient battalions have been added to the Army to enable the system to be worked. Is not that an instance of a case in which great care was taken at the time to institute a beneficial reform which was welcomed by the Service, but, owing to our system of Parliamentary Government, it was allowed to fall into disuse? the consequence, of course, being that we lost all the benefit of the system. To take another instance—I remember some years ago meeting the Secretary of State for War, when I congratulated him on having got a vote very easily through the House of Commons which he did not expect to get through without opposition. The amount asked for was only half what was actually required, and I ventured to observe that it was a pity he had not asked for all that was wanted. His answer was “Ah! but then I might not have got it.” That shows in another way how we are tied up by our system of party government. He knew that he wanted twice as much, but he did not ask for it, because he did not trust the House of Commons to give him so large a sum. The point, however, to be remembered is that the Army is governed by a civilian who is directly responsible to his colleagues, to the House of Commons, and to the country at large, and you cannot relieve him of that responsibility. I think Sir Charles Dilke on the last occasion very ably pointed out that it was quite impossible for any Advisory Board to be instituted, because it would interfere with that responsibility. Suppose, for instance, that the Commander-in-Chief were allowed to present an annual report to Parliament. If he were in this report to differ from, or to give away, the Secretary of State in any way, he would not only interfere with the responsibility of the latter, but he would upset and spoil the political game. After all, politics is a game, and you must play the game according to the rules; and if the Commander-in-Chief went behind the Secretary of State for War in any way, or showed up anything that the Secretary of State wished to conceal, the political game could not be played. The lecturer proposes to get over the difficulty, which is no doubt a very serious one—that we cannot get the country to know exactly the state of affairs, because it must go through a system of party government—by the institution of an Advisory Board, composed of five persons, three of whom, I presume, would represent the Navy, and two the Army. The duties of this Board are briefly, as I understand the lecturer, to prepare for war, to undertake the Intelligence business of both the Admiralty and the War Department to supply the executive with all information, and to advise Parliament. As these duties will take up a great deal of time, the members of the Board are to devote themselves solely to them, and to have no other official business. At present, the chief technical advisers of the Government are so occupied with routine duties that they have not time to go into the higher questions of preparation for possible wars, and that is, I presume, one of the reasons why the lecturer proposes to adopt an Advisory Board. But, is it not rather a difficult matter to constitute an Advisory Board independent entirely of the Secretary of State for War, and of the First Lord of the Admiralty, independent also of the Commander-in-Chief, and of the Naval First Lord, who shall have under their control the Intelligence Departments of both Services and

shall communicate direct with a standing Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament? Is not that raising up a body which must result in friction with the authorities that be? Is it not creating a fifth wheel to the coach? Supposing there is a difference of opinion between this Advisory Board and the Secretary of State for War and his advisers; supposing that the Advisory Board, in communication with this Joint Standing Committee of both Houses, give advice which is different from the advice given by the official advisers of the First Lord of the Admiralty and of the Secretary of State for War: The Standing Joint Committee, intimately associated as it necessarily must be with its Advisory Board, will be inclined to agree with that Board in opposition to the responsible Parliamentary heads of the Navy and Army. What then becomes of the responsibility of the First Lord of the Admiralty, and of the Secretary of State for War? It seems to me that the result must be utter confusion. The lecturer has alluded to the French system. I have not sufficient acquaintance with the French system to make any profitable observations, but I must say that on the face of it there appear to be merits in it which might lead us out of the *impasse* which exists. He also referred to the inter-communication of the Admiralty and the War Department. Having had some experience of that in the Joint Naval and Military Committee of which I was Secretary for some years, I know the great advantage that accrues from bringing together the high officers of both Departments, in one body, to discuss matters of harbour and coast defence and so forth, and that it enables many things to be disposed of which might otherwise become the subject of lengthy correspondence. But these principal officers of the two Departments have their hands full of routine work, which prevents them personally attending to those matters of high consideration that the lecturer proposes should be assigned to his Advisory Board. If this Advisory Board could be dissociated from Parliament—association, however, is the essence of the lecturer's proposal—and made an advisory committee to the Secretary of State, I think it would be most desirable. You would then have two or three officers who would have their hands free, would not be occupied by any other duties, and would be able to give their whole attention and time to the consideration of preparations for war at any and every point. I think it would be a very desirable thing to have such a Board; but this is not the proposal of the lecturer, and I confess I do not see how his proposal enables the requirements of the Service to be raised out of the sphere of party government. On the last occasion, I referred to an Imperial Council of Defence. I looked forward to a time when we might be able to get over the difficulty by putting the Army and the Navy entirely outside the domain of politics. If we could only get that done, of course the lecturer's object would be achieved. At a future time, when the great self-governing Colonies have reached the point at which they can contribute to the general exchequer for war services, it may be possible then to have an outside body, an Imperial Council of Defence. By the by, that suggestion I see is attributed by the lecturer to the Imperial Federation League, but I think it began much earlier than that. I believe Sir Frederick Young, when he was Secretary of the Royal Colonial Institute, thought of it and published papers on the subjects. If we could only get such a body of Home and Colonial statesmen to consider all the great questions of Imperial Defence authoritatively with the help of experts, both official and non-official, so that it would be in a position to say: "The Empire requires such and such defence, and the cost will be so much"; and if such a council were empowered to allocate the cost to the mother country and the great Colonies in some recognised and approved proportion—of course the Colonies would be able to bear very little at first—it might then be possible, temporarily, to remove the defence of the Empire out of the sphere of politics, until such time as the defence requirements of the Empire were known to the people of the Empire. Politics must of course come in eventually because each Government would have to present its quota of the bill of costs to its own Parliament and fight it out there. The main point, however, that we are all anxious for would be secured, and the public would know what the requirements for the defence of the Empire really were, and, knowing the state of the case, it would be their own fault if the necessary measures were not passed in their respective Parliaments to enable those requirements to be met.

Colonel T. MYLES SANDYS, M.P. (late 3rd Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment) :—The remarks that I venture to offer to-day upon the able paper under consideration are only justified by the fact that I am a Member of Parliament who takes some interest in the subject, and that I have had the good fortune to have some years' service and experience in various parts of the world. The point which I think we shall all agree upon is included in the paragraph quoted by the lecturer from the works of another authority :—"When I reflect upon the issues involved, I am lost in amazement at the indifference of the public. To what is this indifference to be attributed? It cannot be to want of information, for this subject (Imperial Defence) has been placed before them over and over again, here and elsewhere, under every aspect : it cannot be to any inherent difficulty in the subject, for it is devoid of professional technicality, and so simple that a child may comprehend it." Well, Sir, I do not think it is so simple that a child could comprehend it, for the lecturer in the admirable paper he has read to us has dealt with the whole question in a manner which I confess has, in the short time before me for consideration of the paper, completely taken one's breath away. I do not mean to say there are not a great many valuable suggestions in it, but they are questions of such far-reaching extent, and involving consequences so great should they not be based upon the correct principles attained by the experience of nations in war, that we may well pause before we express an opinion upon questions involving such important matters. The first, and perhaps most important point in the whole thing, is the question of how and where we are to begin Army reform, and it is to that point especially I would venture to address a few words, without going into details as to armament, or obliterating the lines which are the recognised lines of demarcation between different arms of the Service. But with reference to Army reform, it does seem to me that what we have to do is to concentrate our minds upon the bedrock of the military machine, because unless the machinery which turns out our military working subordinate machine is itself correct in its working, we cannot expect that its effects will be good. It does seem to me—and I have given some little thought to the matter, as the lecturer perhaps may be aware—that where our military administration fails is that the civilian element is allowed at the War Office to intrude too far into the military working of our Army. What we want is that our Army should be thoroughly and entirely administered by the best military experts that can be furnished from the ranks of our Army, and it has seemed to me that the man in whose hands the whole reins governing the details of the entire Department should be placed is the Commander-in-Chief. He seems to be the man who should control the whole machine. It may be said that it is essentially a part of our Constitution that our military administration shall be subordinate to the civilian administration. I say well and good ; that is a constitutional principle that we are all most ready to accept, that is to say, that the Secretary of State for War is responsible to Parliament for the efficiency of the Army. But because he is supreme to the military administrator (who, as I say, should be the Commander-in-Chief) it does not follow that there should be subordinate civilian officials in the War Office to hamper the working of the military men who control these Departments. I will point out exactly what I mean. There is an official in the War Office who is called the Permanent Under-Secretary. He is a civilian ; he has had no military training whatsoever ; but the Secretary of State for War, however able and conscientious a Minister he may be, is subject to the changes of administration, while the Permanent Under-Secretary remains for ever, and his influence over the War Office is like the dead hand that can control the activity of any too zealous administrator within the range of the War Office. Then, again, we have a Financial Secretary to the War Office, another civilian who has been trained for the most part in the Treasury. The endeavour of the Treasury is to grasp the control more or less of every one of our public Departments. What need have we in the Army for a Financial Secretary? The first thing I would suggest for improving our Army organisation is to get rid of the Financial Secretary altogether. What should be done is that the money which Parliament votes for the Army should be handed to the military authorities, and they should keep a proper

record of how the money is expended, and that record should be considered sufficient. We do not require a Financial Secretary, because there is an Accountant-General, with an experienced staff under him, to attend to that matter. That, however, is a mere detail. But the question is, how the Commander-in-Chief should be advised and supported. We cannot take a better example than the sister Service. The Board of Admiralty is composed almost entirely of sailors, all the best men in the naval profession, and the First Lord has the advice of these naval men; and the administration of our Navy, I think we shall all agree, leaves very little to be desired. Let us bring the same principle into the administration of our Army. Let the Commander-in-Chief be, so to speak, a military copy of the First Sea Lord at the Admiralty, and let him have a Board of advisers under him, probably composed of the Adjutant-General, the Quarter-Master-General, the Military Secretary, and the officer at the head of the supply, in all perhaps some seven or eight officers, heads of Departments of the Army. There the Commander-in-Chief has his Military Board. That Board can advise him on the working of each of their Departments, and each year it should be part of the duty of the Commander-in-Chief, who in a military sense should be responsible to Parliament and to the nation for the efficiency of the Army, to embody in a document his views upon the requirements of the Army, in order to bring it to a state of efficiency, and that document he should submit to the Secretary of State for War, and the Secretary of State for War should himself, with his own remarks, lay the matter before Parliament or before some body deputed by them on their behalf, to consider or recommend—which recommendation should be adopted—all the measures put forward for the efficiency of the Army. This, I take it, would cover the ground which the lecturer has put before us for an Advisory Board, the only difference between us being that instead of this Advisory Board of eminent persons who perhaps—I may be pardoned for using such an expression—would have to be got together in a hurried way, we should have the firm experience of officers of great knowledge, in whom the country would have confidence, headed by the Commander-in-Chief, the picked man of the whole of the British Army. His reports are passed through the Secretary of State for War to the Cabinet and to Parliament, embodying the whole military experience of the best men we can find. That, I take it, is the way in which the administration of the Army and the first reform of our present unsatisfactory state of things should be set in motion. With regard to details as to armament and so forth, defence, and how to organise the civil population, the limits of time at my disposal will not permit me to enter upon them on this occasion. But I did think for once I might have the honour of laying before this meeting of experts my views of the matter which has occupied my attention for some time.

T. MILLER MAGUIRE, Esq., LL.D. (late Inns of Court V.R. Corps):—As I told General Webber before, I did not like to say much in regard to such a tremendous subject as he has taken in hand. I waited patiently to see whether any other gentleman or any expert was ready to rise before I trespassed on the attention of the audience. It has been asked why it is that when we have had three hundred reports made, nothing has come of them. The reports, according to the learned and gallant lecturer, would occupy a lifetime. Whose lifetime?—the lifetime of a David or the lifetime of a Methuselah! I would not undertake to read the three hundred reports in the remainder of my short life. With regard to why it is that these reports have not been collated and edited and brought before the public I can only answer from the point of view of the constitutional law, and not from the point of view of a military expert. I think the reason is the tendency of the art of war as well as of the art of government to decay when the principal duty of rulers and leaders of mankind is not to lead but to follow, not to teach the man in the street but to wait till the man in the street makes up his mind before they make up theirs. I am not giving that on my own authority. The answer to why a nation like this of 40,000,000 people absolutely goes staggering along, a model of ineptitude, and drifts so that when it comes to be faced by a few thousands of peasants who could have had no military nor constitutional policy, nor could have been properly armed a decade

ago, is given by Captain Mahan. Some of my audience know Captain Mahan's books well. In a book entitled "The Influence of Sea-Power on America" he tried to teach his own people the necessity for being ready, and tried to teach them the lessons which had been taught to the Greeks and the Romans and the English in the days of Elizabeth. He says, I think on page 211, that so thoroughly soldenored are both parties in England with the notion that ability of government is ability to gain votes, that they are absolutely unfit to conduct the destinies of the British nation in a crisis. I agree with him entirely. He says that neither of the parties is likely to be of the least good to the nation. He declares that Tories and Whigs are equally behind the times, imbued with the ideas of the Manchester School. I do not know what party the gallant lecturer belongs to. I have been working for eighteen years as much as I could for the Unionist Party. Whichever the party is, Captain Mahan thinks this party system is wrong as applied to foreign policy and war, and an anachronism, and declares that with our present leaders there is little hope for us. "When men in sympathy with the ideas now arising among Englishmen come on the stage we shall see a change for the better—not before." I was surprised to find that General Webber was under this kind of fetish of Parliamentary Government, and his admiration for Cabinets and all that kind of thing. He talks about the Constitution. What is the Constitution? When was the Constitution formed? What is the object of the Constitution? Why should we reverence the Constitution? Our ancestors upset it as often as they pleased. Is the War Office a part of our Constitution: if so, for how long? Is the obstructive Treasury, of which the Prime Minister so bitterly complained; if so, for how long? Was the Constitution made for us, or were we made for the Constitution? Yankees have also a Constitution, apparently rigid, but they make short work of its rules when they think fit; it did not in the slightest degree prevent them the other day from making subjects of the people of Cuba and the Philippines. Your admiration for a destructive Constitution must give place to the necessity for preserving the State. It is not the pillar of the State. The pillars of the State are the Navy and the Army. If the Constitution as it exists, if our Cabinets, Party Government, and Parliaments are utterly effete and worthless, if they will not work well for the State, then it becomes the duty of the gallant General and the rest of us to see whether or not we cannot alter the Constitution as quickly as possible. We have had before us recently two more schemes. Will they do the least good? I should like to ask Sir John Colomb his opinion as to how these two new plans—Mr. Brodrick's and that of Mr. Clinton Dawkins—will work. We have this wonderful skeleton plan of reformation—I think General Webber calls it, of Mr. Brodrick, this new scheme of Army reform. Is there a man in Europe, or in America, or any Briton, who is not a party man first and a patriot afterwards, who believes that it will be of the least use, that it is more than a mere matter of shreds and patches, a mere tessellated pavement of badly fitting imitation of mosaic without cement? You will find that this magnificent scheme of reform will be reformed itself before three years are over, and that new scheme of reform will also be reformed unless statesmen began first to consider how they are to lead instead of how they are to follow the people in regard to questions of vital importance for the stability of our Empire. Then we have this other matter, the revolution of the War Office. I hope it will do some good. I am sure Sir John Colomb will do us an enormous amount of good, the influence of which will be felt for many a day, if he could assure us that the Government has any intention of adopting the plan suggested by Mr. Clinton Dawkins. If it is not framed by experts, I do not know what an expert is. But I am not a worshipper of so-called experts. I have met a great number of general officers and colonels who know a great deal less about the campaigns of modern times than civilians know. I know that on the Continent of Europe some of the greatest military reforms have been accomplished by civilians. Bonaparte was not a veteran expert in 1796-7, yet he made short work of his opponents. If we wait till the professional experts of our Government offices initiate reform we shall never get any reform. I think everybody who has anything to say from the point of view of history, or even theory, should be carefully heard, whether he is an "expert," so-called, or not. The only thing

that will move our Government to put our military house in order, and to give up an existence of muddling and blundering, is the pressure of public opinion : and the sooner a powerful agitation is started in favour of military and naval efficiency combined, the better for all classes of our people, otherwise neither the Cabinet nor the Parliament will help us in the least.

Admiral Sir EDMUND FREMANTLE, G.C.B. C.M.G. :—I regret that I was not able to hear the lecture delivered, but having had the advantage of reading it, I think I am capable at all events of speaking to the lecture, if not to the discussion. If I had not been specially asked to come, here I should not have done so, because I was otherwise engaged, and also because, although it is a subject of the greatest interest, I doubt whether it is exactly in my province, and I am quite sure there are many here who are capable of discussing it better than myself. The main proposal of the lecturer, as I understand it, is that there should be an Advisory Board. Undoubtedly he is right in thinking that some advice is required in the public Departments. I repeat that that is one of the things from which we especially suffer. I can speak perhaps more particularly of the Admiralty, because I know very well that we have done some things in hot haste, and have been led to do them for a longer period of time than seemed to me necessary, and the result of the hot haste has not always been satisfactory. We have it from Sir John Hopkins that it is impossible for the Admiralty to do much more than attend to their routine duties, and I have very little doubt it is much the same in the War Department. They cannot do much more than attend to the numerous things which must daily come before them. This routine work and daily work, very often of the greatest importance, might be reduced by decentralisation : at the same time the daily work of a great Department, whether it is the War Department or the Admiralty, must be very large, not to say excessive, for the members who have to do it. Under these circumstances it is impossible that the Lords of the Admiralty, or the heads of the War Office, can have sufficient time to enquire into those details of construction, invention, and improvement which are the product of the age, and consequently we are often behind-hand. I should like to fortify myself by an opinion which I heard the other day from an officer. This officer said he had made the acquaintance of the French Admiral Courbet, who was a very distinguished and far-seeing French naval officer. Admiral Courbet made this remark :—"It strikes me that it is very curious that your Admiralty makes so little use of the information which they have at their disposal in the officers who are no longer on full pay and no longer employed in direct service afloat ; their opinions are never asked." It has always struck me as very curious, and I must say I entirely agree with him. There are officers that one could name—I do not speak of myself, because I am shortly going on the shelf, and I am quite prepared to make room for younger men—in our Service, and I have very little doubt also in the sister Service, who are thoroughly competent in every respect, whether they have retired or are on half-pay, whose opinions must be valuable. At the time when they could give all their energies, knowledge, and experience to the Services they are relegated to the shelf, and if they give their experience at all it is at the United Service Institution, which I have heard irreverently described as a "talking shop." I agree with Admiral Courbet, and I agree with the lecturer in what he states in his lecture, that the Services possess men who have all the necessary experience and all the necessary knowledge to form this Advisory Board. I have spoken generally of the necessity for an Advisory Board. I wish to cap that to some extent by showing how useful and how absolutely necessary the Ordnance Select Committee has been. We know that that is a permanent Committee ; we know that it investigates carefully into all improvements, all inventions, all the changes in ordnance and explosives, and then makes its report. Those reports may not always be absolutely reliable, but at least we have a guarantee that they have been carefully threshed out, and that every endeavour has been made not to pass a thing that was unsatisfactory, and if mistakes are made—for human nature always will make mistakes—they are not made because the report has been drawn up in a hurry, or because it has not been sufficiently

considered. We know very well that the Ordnance Select Committee reports to the Secretary of State, and that of course makes it a very different committee from the proposal which has been made by the lecturer. The proposal made by the lecturer, as I understand him, is that they should act practically independently. I do not see exactly what that can be. It appears to me to be a decided difficulty, but I can quite see that it is possible to have a Committee of both Houses, as was proposed by the lecturer, and that this Advisory Board should be in direct communication with them, and I cannot see that that would be in any way contrary to our constitutional practice. At the same time, it does seem to me that the Advisory Board must be appointed by somebody. You can scarcely ask for a general election as to who should be on the Advisory Board. The members of the Advisory Board must undoubtedly be appointed by the Crown. It also seems to me that we might carry this Advisory Board a little further. Supposing, for instance, it consisted of eight members, four belonging to each Service; and supposing it took over, as has been proposed by the lecturer, the Intelligence Department, undoubtedly they would have to go to the War Department and to the Admiralty for all the information and reports which they have, and they must be in close touch with them. They would form sub-committees, and I should propose that they made their reports to the Secretary of State, and to the First Lord of the Admiralty, from time to time as well as being called before this Committee of both Houses, to which the lecturer has alluded. I should hope that the Secretary of State and the First Lord of the Admiralty would use them as sub-committees. For instance, two naval officers might make inquiries into certain ships which had to be built, two military officers might make certain enquiries with reference to tactics on the military side. When a burning or difficult subject was brought forward which required to be threshed out and which the ordinary department was not prepared to give the time to thresh out, instead of as at present is too often the case, passing it over to the civilians in every department, who really do not understand the subject—for that is what is done in the Admiralty, and even more in the War Department—these subjects would be threshed out by two or three, I presume, thoroughly competent men, who would be appointed for a term of years and so far be practically independent. They would be able to assist without getting rid of the Intelligence Department of either Service; the Intelligence Department would be a comparatively small one, and it would hand over to them certain subjects for consideration which they would consider just in the same way that the Ordnance Committee considers matters now. I can only say, in conclusion, that if anything I have said, or that the lecturer has said, leads to the subject being more fully discussed—and, perhaps, after all he may have more reason in his proposals than I have in mine—whatever the result, if there is any, of this discussion may be, I cannot help thinking that in these days we are rather more alive to the benefits of the discussions we have at this Institution than we were some time ago, and I very much doubt whether the Institution could now be called by that opprobrious term to which I have just referred. If any suggestion which has been thrown out to-day should result in a better preparation for war, more continuity in our military administration and generally in our better preparedness, I think General Webber will have done a great service in bringing this subject before the Institution.

Colonel Sir F. T. H. HUTTON, K.C.M.G., C.B., A.D.C., *p.s.c.*:—I regret I am hardly in a position to discuss the extremely important points which General Webber has brought before the meeting to-day. They are matters which involve the policy of the country, questions of importance upon which an officer like myself on the active list finds it very embarrassing to discuss or criticise—I do not therefore purpose to deal with the question of Army reform. There is, however, one point with reference to a remark of General Webber as regards the defence of our overseas Colonies. I think, perhaps, he has overlooked the fact that all the reports connected with the defence of our overseas Colonies, whether Australia or Canada (with both of which I have been associated), are most elaborately and carefully prepared, and are sent to the Colonial Defence Committee, where they are carefully collated, thought out, and discussed. I was extremely pleased and gratified to hear my friend Dr. Miller Maguire speak. It is many years

since he kindly backed me up in our efforts to get the question of mounted infantry accepted by the Army; and I was extremely pleased to hear him enunciate the view that the real way to get any reform accepted in this country is by the education of public opinion. I am perfectly certain of this, that it must be the people, the great electorates, the constituencies of this country, who must demand reform, and if these reforms are to take a practical shape it must be by the people being educated by those who are experts on the different points in connection with which reforms are required. My experience has been very considerable in our self-governing Colonies, where the constituencies are composed of extremely hard-headed and deep-thinking men, and who, if great public questions are put to them in a straightforward, practical, and sound manner, invariably decide to deal with them in the same spirit, and to insure that their representatives in Parliament do the same.

MR. LEEDHAM WHITE:—Last week I was sitting with two friends, both Prussian officers, in a German town. The conversation turned on the war. The officers spoke in a friendly and even laudatory manner of the British Army, but they both agreed that it could not be brought up to the highest standard of efficiency until it had been withdrawn from civilian control and management. Of course we know that it is impossible to do this under our system of Parliamentary government; and this being so, it would seem to some of us that General Webber's plan of a strong Advisory Board of military and naval men, working with a Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament, may be a good one, as a long step in the right direction, and one which does not clash with our political institutions. The remark has been made before in this room that what is really wanted to impress the British public is a weighty expression of opinion from trusted naval and military experts as to what reforms are required in order to give us an Army and Navy adequate to the defence of the Empire; and it is thought that a permanent Advisory Board of the sort suggested by General Webber would secure a respectful hearing from the public and from Parliament of its reports and recommendations, which would not be influenced by party bias or by the wish to catch votes. If Parliament disregarded its recommendations, it would do so at its peril, and the nation would know on whom to fix the blame should disaster ensue. At present we do not manage our military affairs on business principles. It is a business principle that only experts who understand a trade can successfully conduct it. Supposing Government were to take over some vast manufacturing concern, and the managers gave important advice which was disregarded from political considerations or from unwise economy? What would these managers do if they had proper self-respect? They would say that unless they were allowed to conduct the business from the sole point of view of making a suitable article in the best way they must resign their posts. Why not apply these principles to the management of our military affairs? As things stand at present, military opinion is liable to be overridden by political exigencies, and as far as I am aware we have hitherto never had an instance of a Commander-in-Chief throwing up his position because he could not impress his views on the Government of the day. An Advisory Board would have no executive authority nor responsibility, and need not resign, were its advice not followed. But at least the British public would know what advice had been given, and if it thought that vital national interests had been neglected, it could make its indignation felt in a very effective manner.

Major-General WEBBER, in reply, said:—I have to thank Colonel Sandys and Sir Edmund Fremantle for the way in which they have spoken of my proposal, because they are two authorities who may look upon it from opposite points of view, and who have had opportunities both in Parliamentary and official life of weighing the possibilities of my suggestion. The very strong measures which Dr. Maguire proposes I have avoided, because if the course of my paper has been followed it will be seen that I have as carefully as possible tried to show how the existing conditions do not clash with this proposal. Of course, any criticism of what has happened in the past and what has led up to the condition of things under Parliamentary Government which now exists, has to be read with care and with a certain amount of reference to the

authorities. I have quoted, because in a paper which occupies only one hour you will very well understand it is difficult to crowd in all the quotations that one would wish to give of what has happened in the past in sufficient clearness to be convincing. In some of the notes I have brought forward the points more in detail, and, therefore, I would ask that when the paper appears in the *JOURNAL* of the Institution, those members who take an interest in the matter will read it again. Mr. Leclham White's reference to "business principles" reminds us of what one of our magazines urged on the country last year. The people who say that we ought to conduct the affairs of the defence of this Empire upon ordinary business principles do not know what it all means—do not know what they are talking about. In my paper on the 20th February I went more into detail on that point, to show that what we all recognised as "ordinary business principles" do not go further than their application to the measures which have been the subject of recommendation of Mr. Clinton Dawkins' Committee, the report of which appeared in the *Times* of the 6th inst. If you take the nineteen recommendations of that Committee you will find that seventeen of them refer to matters of administration and management of the daily business of the War Office, and have very little to do with real Army reform. They are all questions connected with the War Office which have very little to do with the art of warfare or the preparations for it, except so far as they deal with the running of the machine in time of peace. A careful study of them will elicit the fact that there is not one which has not formed the subject of report and recommendation in the past. There are only two of the recommendations which really have anything to do with the real preparation for time of war. I assert that every one of the violations of ordinary business principles by the Admiralty and War Office are due to our Parliamentary procedure. What we want to-day is a body of men drawn from the most experienced of the officers of both our Services, a body of men who shall have nothing to do but to dwell upon all the complicated questions of war, and to watch what is going on on the other side of the peace horizon, which will deal with the subject in such a way that every principle which has hitherto been neglected shall be formulated and made intelligible and brought straight up to the mind of the British public, as represented by the three estates of the realm.

The CHAIRMAN (Sir John Colomb):—I shall conclude by proposing a very hearty vote of thanks to the gallant lecturer for his extremely suggestive and most thoughtful paper. I should like before doing so to make one or two very brief remarks. I think the Institution is very much indebted to the gallant General who has prepared this paper. He has requested us to read the paper when it appears in the *JOURNAL*, and when we read it again I feel sure we shall find it only emphasises the fact that the subject requires a great deal of study and thought in order to get to the bottom of this very abstruse question. For it is a very abstruse question. I find myself in a great difficulty. My sympathies are all with the Navy and the Army, but, I also know something of the internal working of Parliament, like my honourable friend Colonel Sandys. I am bound to say, I think, the only way of accomplishing the object in view is by that education of the man in the street, which was spoken of by Sir Edward Hutton. You will have a very great deal of education to give him, for I am sure Parliament will not give up one iota of what it considers its rights and privileges without tremendous pressure from outside. One very curious thing I may mention. In the simple matter of procedure when dealing with the Estimates, Parliamentary procedure is especially framed so that a question of high policy cannot be in order on either the Army or the Navy Estimates. I have tried to raise it during the last sixteen years on several of these occasions, but have never succeeded. As I have said in the House, you are obliged, as it were, when the Navy Estimates come on to get into a water-tight compartment and put on blue spectacles and see nothing but blue water, and you must not consider military aspects of defence at all. On the other hand, on the Army Estimates you have got to get into a red water-tight compartment, put on red spectacles and ignore the existence of the Navy altogether. A great number of men would like to see that system broken down inside the House, but I despair, owing to the enormous difficulties of getting anything

altered in Parliamentary procedure under the Constitution. I am sure Colonel Sandys will bear me out in that. I merely mention this to show that as it is difficult to do a very simple thing which would be for the benefit of the public service, it would be much more difficult to get Parliament to accept an Advisory Board which would really poach upon its own special preserves. You must recollect that Parliament thinks it is the centre and source of all wisdom—the “enquire within”, upon everything; and anybody in any service who attempts for one moment to dispute that position immediately puts the House on its guard, and it will not give them standing ground at all. I only mention these things to show the difficulties of the question. But there is one practical matter about which I confess I am a bit puzzled by my gallant friend; the lecturer makes the proposal that the Estimates would be prepared and submitted to Parliament by men whose positions are not changed by a party vote.

General WEBBER :—I think there is a little confusion. The Estimates would be prepared and submitted to Parliament exactly in the same way as they are now.

The CHAIRMAN :—The original framers of the Estimates would be independent of party vote.

General WEBBER :—They would be the Secretary of State and the First Lord of the Admiralty, advised by their advisers as they are now in every respect; the Estimates would go forward exactly in the same way as they do now. They would be treated in exactly the same way as they were before. Lord Randolph Churchill's Committee in 1888. The Estimates that had been submitted by the then Secretary of State for War were referred by Parliament for the observations of Lord Randolph Churchill's Committee.

The CHAIRMAN :—However, I would only point out that anything of the sort would be extremely difficult. Votes would have to be defended and decided in Parliament by party votes, and that is where the difficulty comes in. I am bound, however, to say that we are greatly indebted to the gallant lecturer for putting before us an elaborate and very thoughtful paper on this question. There can be no doubt that there is a gap in our administrative arrangements. I venture now to repeat what I told the House of Commons in the recent debate on Army reform that the Defence Committee of the Cabinet is, to my mind, nothing but a pious political imposture—it is nothing else, and the sooner we get something or some body responsible for principles of policy of defence, the better. I am sure you will join with me most willingly in a vote of thanks to my gallant friend General Webber.