

PARAPHRASE TELEGRAM

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

To the United Kingdom High Commissioner in the Commonwealth of Australia.

(Sent 12.30 a.m., 2nd February, 1939.)

No.16. Secret.

Reference telegram from Commonwealth Government of 11th January, No.5. Telegram, text of which is as follows, has been received from His Majesty's Government in New Zealand begins:-

My Prime Minister desires me to inform you that so far as New Zealand Chiefs of Staff report is concerned it deals with a strategic survey of certain Pacific Islands only, and report is adequately summarised in my secret telegram of December 24th No.145. At this stage His Majesty's Government in New Zealand would like to set out more precisely the points which they suggest should be discussed at the Conference namely:-

(a) Possible lines of action by enemy powers against Empire interests in the south west Pacific in the period before the arrival of naval reinforcements, including (i) operations to capture bases in the Western Pacific. (ii) Nature and scale of possible operations against Empire trade. (iii) Nature and scale of possible operations against Australian and New Zealand territory.

(b) Measures necessary to defend - (i) Pacific Islands and Mandated territories, notably Fiji Tonga New Hebrides Solomon Islands. (ii) Ships trading with United Kingdom New Zealand and Australia. (iii) Australian and New Zealand territories.

(c)



(c) Most effective means of cooperation with the United Kingdom in the defence of British Commonwealth after providing for security in the South Western Pacific, including schemes for mutual reinforcement.

(d) Coordination of defence policy in peace and war.

(e) Sources of supplies of equipment after the outbreak of war.

(f) Scales of reserves of supplies, including fuel and equipment.

(g) Possible effect of German demand for the return of Mandated Territories.

(h) Economic aspects of war, including probable effect on trade and shipping.

(j) Policy in relation to Trans Pacific Air route and the United States activities in the Pacific.

This agenda is dependant only in a small degree on report of the New Zealand Chiefs of Staff which affects point (b) above only. His Majesty's Government in New Zealand had hoped that it would be possible to hold the conference at latest by mid-March and they are somewhat disturbed at the proposal of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom not to hold it before the middle of April. His Majesty's Government in New Zealand still hope this will be possible and in view of relatively small importance of report of New Zealand Staff Chiefs already referred to, suggest that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom may be able to decide on their representations forthwith and arrange for the arrival of their representatives by the middle of March.

The substance of this telegram is being repeated to the High Commissioner for Western Pacific and to His Majesty's Government in the Commonwealth of Australia. Ends. Following reply has been sent. Text begins.

His



His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom agree that Conference should meet by the middle of March if possible or as soon as may be practicable thereafter. They are endeavouring to arrange for United Kingdom Service representatives to be available at that time and further telegram will be sent as to this as soon as possible.

As regards agenda of Conference on the defence side, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom fully recognise importance of the various matters referred to in your telegram. It will be appreciated however that adequate consideration of some of the topics mentioned, such as those set out under (d), (g) and (h) in your telegram, would call for a meeting more in the nature of an Imperial Conference in which representatives of other Dominions and India might wish to participate. It is assumed that on such topics the task of the present Conference will be merely exploratory with a view to drawing up reports for further consideration by the Governments concerned. This would not apply to immediate practical problems such as those mentioned under (a), (b) and (c), which it is thought could be fully discussed at the Conference with a view to reaching definite conclusions. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom agree that (j) should be included in Agenda. Text ends.

If discussions at the Conference are to be of the nature suggested it is clear that attendance of senior officers of the three defence services will be necessary, and if Conference is to open in March it would be advisable that Officers at present in the neighbourhood of New Zealand should be selected. It is thought, therefore, that most suitable arrangement would be for Sir Ragnar Colvin and Lieutenant-General Squires to be the Naval and Military Service representatives on behalf of United Kingdom Government, provided that the Commonwealth Government were

willing



willing that they should so act in addition to any duties which they may be performing in relation to the Conference for the Commonwealth Government.

Please approach Commonwealth Government accordingly and inform us as soon as possible whether they have any objection.

For your own information, as regards Royal Air Force representation position is that consideration is being given to the question whether it would be possible for Sir Arthur Longmore to be released from his duties in connection with Aircraft Mission to Australia in order to take part in Conference in New Zealand in latter part of March. View of Government here as regards Conference generally is that it is desirable that as far as possible it should be confined to immediate problems.