

D.O.3a.

SECRET

Y0257 A Bennis Log, 47.

No. X. 720/232

Subject:

Paapri conference

Reference to previous correspondence:

5/10/39
MRG - 5/20/39
5/27/39
A.26 - 5/29/39

With the compliments of Mr. Suxea

A copy has also been sent to Mr. Balfour (FO)
Maj. Jacob.
A.14, Ady, W.O.

Dominions Office, Downing Street,

193

10 MAR 1939

TELEGRAM

AUSTRALIA

From the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Dated 8th March, 1939. Received 10.24.a.m. 8th March.

IMMEDIATE.

No. 24.

(41) Your telegram of the 7th March Pacific Conference received. A press cable from London in the following terms is being published here. Begins:-

An Imperial Pacific Conference will be held in New Zealand late this month. The Conference was initiated by New Zealand and will be restricted to Defence. Britain Australia and New Zealand will participate and it is expected that Lieutenant General Squires and Sir Arthur Longmore in addition to other defence personalities from London will go to New Zealand for the Conference. The object of the Conference is to establish an Imperial policy for Defence in the Pacific. Ends.

As the press naturally are following this up by request for statement so far as Australia concerned I telephoned the Prime Minister of New Zealand who however still thinks that statement should be issued simultaneously. Have sent him today following telegram. Begins:-

Following my telegram of yesterday and telephone message today following is proposed statement with regard to the Pacific Conference Begins. Prime Minister announced that the Governments of New Zealand United Kingdom and Australia have agreed to hold at an early date in New Zealand a Conference on mutual defence interests in the Pacific.

The Conference will be confined to Service experts but it is understood that the High Commissioner for Western Pacific will also attend. It will be impossible for Ministers of the United Kingdom and Australia to be present. The

Australian

Australian representative will be Vice Admiral Sir Ragnar Colvin first Naval Member and Senior Officers of the Australian Army and Air Forces.

Mr. Lyons said that there was a continuous exchange of technical information between the Services of the United Kingdom and New Zealand and Australia. This was supplemented by the exchange of officers and by the joint exercises which were regularly carried out between Australia and New Zealand Squadrons. It was now felt that the time was opportune for a Round Table discussion between the Service Representatives upon broad Defence problems associated with the Pacific. In the absence of Ministers and as a purely technical Conference, Service Representatives would engage in an exchange of information in regard to Defence plans of parts of the Empire concerned particularly in respect of their inter-relations.

The Prime Minister recalled the reference in the published proceedings of the Imperial Conference of 1937, and those by Australia and New Zealand particularly, to the importance of close co-operation in Defence matters.

Mr. Lyons also referred to the following statement from the Defence Minister's policy statement on the 6th December last:-

"Our links with other parts of the British Empire are being strengthened by air communications and strategic bases. Thus Darwin is opposite the end of the archway of which Singapore is the other pillar. Port Moresby is to be developed as a base for mobile Naval and Air Forces and through its hand will be joined with New Zealand and Britain through the Pacific Islands as well as across the Tasman".

The discussions of experts would not involve ^{the} commitment ^{the} of Government in any respect as the questions of policy for either peace or war were the subject for determination by the Governments concerned. Discussions of this nature between experts would be helpful in the examination of military aspects of Defence Scheme, policy

policy questions being necessarily reserved for consultation between Ministers at the Imperial Conferences. Ends.

I have told the press today that I cannot make a statement in regard to the matter until the three Governments issue statements simultaneously. In order to prevent press speculation I think we should do this at the earliest possible date.

Glad of advice from you whether the above statement acceptable to you and earliest date on which you are agreeable to publish somewhat similar statement so far as your Government concerned. Message to New Zealand ends. Glad to receive early advice with regard to your agreement or otherwise of terms/proposed statement.