

NATIONAL SERVICE

THE EXPERIENCE OF AUSTRALIA

DRAWBACKS OF VOLUNTARY SYSTEM

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir.—On the question of compulsory military training for all male citizens, perhaps the experience of Australia might be useful.

Mr. Deakin, the Australian Prime Minister, on his return from the Imperial Conference in London, proposed in 1908 the principle of compulsory military training. Before this proposal became law, the Labour Party came into power, and its Prime Minister in 1909 was even more strenuous in its advocacy. Finally, after Lord Kitchener's visit in the same year, the principle of universal liability to be trained was made law on July 1, 1911, for the first time in any English-speaking community.

Junior cadets from the ages of 12 to 14 received 120 hours' drill annually at school by cadet officers who were generally school teachers.

From 14 to 18 years of age the boys were drafted into the senior cadets, and they received the equivalent of 16 whole days' training annually, of which eight days should be in camps of continuous training, the remaining eight days consisting of whole days, half-days, generally Saturday afternoons, and quarter-days of two hours, generally at night. From the age of 18 to 25 they joined the citizen forces, where they received training of 16 whole days annually, similarly to that of senior cadets, and liability to serve in case of war within Australia. The country was divided into areas, and the writer, as an area medical officer, was responsible for the medical supervision of all boys and young men in training from the ages of 12 to 25.

The results of that experience, which ended with the onset of the Great War three years later, convinced me of its value, not only in a military sense but in the wider sense of fitness, physical, mental, and moral.

In the area for which I was responsible, an industrial one in Newcastle, N.S. Wales, there were several sub-centres, and, though the Government granted a small sum annually for rent of an orderly room for the senior cadets, the local people in the area gave land, timber, and labour, and we soon had an orderly room, free of cost, the Government grant then being used for the supply of sporting and other requisites.

It was noticeable how enthusiastic the boys became, many of whom attended the orderly room nightly engaging in boxing contests and other forms of physical exercise under, of course, supervision. They were encouraged to challenge other units in sporting competitions, and the *esprit de corps* so evident was developing into a sense of patriotism which expressed itself later in the War.

But it was from the medical side that the value of supervision was manifested. For statistical purposes various matters were noted, such as colour of eyes, kind of hair, &c., but each boy was medically examined at least once a year from the age of 12 to that of 25, and frequently oftener. It was my practice to visit the schools periodically to see the boys, and one would stop, perhaps, the exercise of a boy, enthusiastic as he may be, if one found that he was overstraining his body. This I found was important, as I have seen in England in recent years in the Scout movement, and others in the voluntary system, doing things that no doctor would permit. In passing may I comment, how many of us in

OIL IN WARTIME

BRITISH PROVISION AND PRECAUTION

A COMPARISON OF RESOURCES

From a Correspondent

During the later stages of the War the authorities responsible for the maintenance of our oil supplies were concerned at the sinking of tankers with their cargoes, sinkings which occurred chiefly in home waters and round the north of Scotland. It was a very junior employee of the first Lord Cowdray (in those days the principal figure in Mexican oil and one of the Government's advisers on naval fuel questions) who furnished for combating this menace a suggestion which was accepted as the most practical solution of what was becoming a serious problem.

He proposed that oil for the Fleet should be discharged at a point on the west coast of Scotland and be carried thence to the North Sea through a 40-mile pipe line, so eliminating much of the sea journey through the zone patrolled by enemy submarines. It may be presumed that the Admiralty have not forgotten this experience and are not ignoring the wartime possibilities of terminating the voyages of supply ships at selected points along the western coast. Lord Cowdray, it is good to know, assured his youthful subordinate of further and profitable opportunities of proving his quality. As oil is the bread and butter of our defence, its safe transport is a correlative to its acquisition. Now that international difficulties appear to be entering upon a phase of quiet adjustment, a statement of our position in regard to oil supplies and their maintenance in periods of disturbance may be interesting without being provocative, even though it should appear that we are more fortunately situated than any other of the Great Powers of Europe, save Russia.

NATURAL SANCTIONS

Marshal Graziani recently described Italy as the "victim of sanctions imposed by Nature." Well, so far as has yet been ascertained, Nature has treated our country as scurvily as she has treated Italy in the matter of an indigenous oil production. Neither Germany nor France is much better off, their home production of natural petroleum being trifling. British commercial enterprise, however, has gone far to overcome Nature's neglect: to-day Great Britain, through British companies, controls over 20 per cent. of the world's oil production at its sources, ensuring a certain continuity of supplies. As a supplement to this controlled production, there are British tankers with a total deadweight capacity of some 4,330,000 tons, a figure only equalled by the United States, if American tanker tonnage registered at Panama is included. Our position, therefore, is that we control both oil and transport sufficient for all our needs, and are in no way dependent on any other country for the strategic oil required by our navy and air force. Similar financial benefits, according to money fields, are enjoyed by the United States, in that it is able to draw on its oil resources in the event of a crisis.

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Imperial and Foreign

SWEDISH AIR FLEET

A FORCE IN THE MAKING

From a Stockholm Correspondent

In the quiet and efficient manner characteristic of her race Sweden is building up the first sizeable air fleet in Scandinavia. Swedish industry with its powerful financial and technical resources is quickly going ahead with an ambitious scheme to establish within the next few years an aircraft production that will make Sweden self-sufficient in the air.

The starting point of these efforts, now well under way, was the adoption by the Swedish Riksdag in June, 1936, of a military reform programme that laid the stress



on air power and anti-aircraft defences. The main provisions for strengthening the Air Force were an increase of first-line aircraft from 80 to 260, and of training machines from 40 to 80; and the quadrupling of all categories of personnel within the Air Force.

Sweden is to possess by July 1, 1943, seven wings (consisting of three squadrons each) of first-line strength, including four bomber wings, stationed at Vasteras; one wing of fighters, at Barkarby, close to Stockholm; one army cooperation wing at Malmen; and one wing of seaplanes at Hagerfors. Five of these will be ready by the end of the present year. The programme will achieve Swedish self-sufficiency after three stages.

ENGLISH MODELS

The first stage was the acquisition abroad of certain standard types. In autumn, 1936, the Government decided to supply the fighter wing with Gloster Gladiator aeroplanes, while the first wing of heavy bombers was to be equipped with Junkers 86K. The material of the first wing of light bombers (Hawker Hart S7A aeroplanes) had been manufactured on licence for some time at Linköping. The first Gladiators were received in September, 1937, and it is hoped that subsequent