

PARAPHRASE TELEGRAM

NEW ZEALAND

From the Governor General of New Zealand.

Dated 17th February, 1939. Received 10.20 a.m. 17th February.

No. 23 Secret.

I am asked by my Prime Minister to communicate to you text of following telegram which he has addressed to the Prime Minister of Commonwealth of Australia today. Telegram begins.

Secret.

Reference your telegram of 15th February I appreciate your apprehension of the difficulties that may militate against a successful Defence Conference at an early date. I fully realise the importance and difficulties of some of the questions which it is proposed to discuss and I recognise the fact that the Defence officers in Australia are very much pressed as is also the case in New Zealand. At the same time I feel that since the Pacific defence matters were discussed at the Imperial Conference the position has changed so radically and the pressure of events is so ominous that with a view to making practical recommendations to the Governments concerned rather than exploring the matters of high policy it is highly desirable that the proposed Conference should be held at the earliest possible moment. For example, paragraphs (a) and (b) of the proposed Agenda while couched in very wide terms would in fact, we contemplate, be interpreted as a practical investigation firstly of the time during which Australia and New Zealand may expect to be without assistance from naval reinforcements from the United Kingdom, secondly the scale and direction of attack that may be contemplated during that period, and thirdly the steps which in combination

combination between the United Kingdom Australia and New Zealand it would be most desirable to take to meet this eventuality. As in New Zealand it may well be in Australia that plans for such a contingency have already been evolved but the New Zealand Government are impressed with the desirability of collaborating in the Pacific defence measures to the utmost extent possible. Similar comments apply to other paragraphs of the proposed agenda. It has always been the intention of the New Zealand Government to provide papers setting out the New Zealand point of view on the subjects of the Agenda which they have proposed and it is hoped that this work which is already in preparation will be completed in time to allow of their delivery to the Australian delegates before their departure for New Zealand. I trust that in all the circumstances you will be able to reconsider the matter and agree to a meeting of the Conference at the earliest date convenient to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. A copy of this message has been repeated to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. Telegram ends.