

ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION.

TO BE EQUIPPED BY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

WILL LEAVE AT END OF YEAR.

SIR DOUGLAS MAWSON ACCEPTS LEADERSHIP.

Canberra, February 21.

"After having given the closest and fullest consideration to the question for several years past," said the Prime Minister (Mr. Bruce) in the House of Representatives to-day, "the Commonwealth Government have reached the conclusion that the time is now ripe for an Australian expedition to proceed to that part of the Antarctic which lies immediately to the south of Australia. They have, therefore, decided to organise and equip such an expedition, which, it is at present contemplated, will leave Australia towards the end of this year.

"In view of his great experience and knowledge of Antarctic conditions and his world-wide reputation in scientific circles, the Government have approached Sir Douglas Mawson and asked him to lead the expedition. This Sir Douglas has informed the Government he is prepared to do."

Mr. Bruce said the interest of the Commonwealth in the Antarctic region lying south of Australia, extending from the Ross Sea in the east to Enderby Land in the west, and which was generally known as the Australian sector, had been often affirmed in the past. Of the various expeditions to this region, the richest so far in scientific and other achievement was Sir Douglas Mawson's expedition of 1911-1914. The expedition that

opportunity would be afforded them of doing so. In deciding to organise this expedition, the Government had been fully conscious that it would further Australian interests in the region that was so close to their shores, and would at the same time promote Australian science in the domain in which Australian citizens had already performed such signal work. In acting in this way, in fulfilment of what they conceived to be a national obligation, they were convinced that the people of Australia would unanimously support the expedition.

Support from New Zealand.

The leader of the Opposition (Mr. Scullin) said in view of the great importance of the project he did not think hon. members would be prepared to make any comment until they had had sufficient time to consider the matter carefully. He suggested that the proper course for Mr. Bruce to adopt was to move the printing of the statement.

The Prime Minister said the object in making the statement was to give the House information regarding the proposition. He then moved that the paper be printed and stated that he had just received a telegram from the Prime Minister of New Zealand intimating that that Government were prepared to contribute £2,500 towards the cost of the expedition.

The announcement was greeted with cheers from both sides of the House.



Sir Douglas Mawson.

the Commonwealth Government has decided to organise this year would, it was hoped, complete and crown this previous Australian effort. The Government in Great Britain had generously placed the Discovery at the disposal of the expedition free of charge. This vessel was at present in the service of the Falkland Island Dependency, and had been specially constructed for work in ice, and was the best ship at present afloat for the purposes of this expedition. The New Zealand Government had been invited to co-operate in the expedition, and the Commonwealth Government would earnestly welcome their co-operation. The British Government had been invited to include representatives in the scientific personnel, and it was hoped that New Zealand would be able to see its way to co-operate in the same manner. The expedition, while being predominantly Australian in character, would thus enjoy the advantage of the active co-operation of other parts of the British Empire.

Objects of the Expedition.

The expedition, Mr. Bruce said, would seek to effect a variety of objects, mostly of a scientific nature. The exploration and mapping out of that part of the coastline which could not be completed by the Mawson expedition of 1911 would be undertaken. Scientific meteorological work would be carried out, and investigations made into the economic resources of the region. The question of exactly locating the coastline of this sector of the Antarctic in which Australia was interested was of material importance. The expedition would therefore carry out hydrographic survey work, comprising the correct location and charting of coasts, islands, rocks and shoals. It was proposed to equip the expedition with aeroplanes, so that inland surveys might be made. The study which would be made of the meteorological conditions would enable the relationship between these conditions and the climate and weather of Australia to be more adequately determined than was at present the case.

Whaling Industry.

A further important aspect of the expedition's work, said Mr. Bruce, would be to carry out investigations into the fauna, notably whales and seals, of the region explored. Whaling in various parts of the Antarctic, notably south of the Falkland Islands, New Zealand, and South Africa, had now assumed considerable importance, and the Government felt that it was most desirable that investigations should be made in the near future to determine the economic and commercial value of the waters of the Australian sector in that respect. The Government were also convinced that the expedition would be of great value, both in training Australian scientists and in raising the level of Australian science in this particular field to the highest point. The Government also felt that if the expedition was postponed for much longer, the result would be that the special experience and scientific knowledge of Antarctic matters acquired by the Mawson Expedition of 1911 would cease to be available. All these considerations had convinced the Government that the present moment was a most opportune one, from all points of view, for the expedition to be organised.

Will Cost £16,000.

It was contemplated, he said, that the expedition would be able to complete its work in the Antarctic summer season, which extends from November, 1929, to March, 1930. As the British Government had placed the Discovery at the disposal of the expedition without charge, the cost so far as Australia was concerned, would be mainly in connection with equipment. The expenditure necessary to carry out the work for the period mentioned was estimated at £16,000. The Government had felt that a number of Australian citizens and institutions might be anxious to associate themselves directly with such an expedition either by financial support or by the presentation of scientific material, and an