

P A P E R S

RELATIVE TO THE

ORGANIZATION OF THE MILITIA

IN

NEW ZEALAND.

PRESENTED BY COMMAND TO BOTH HOUSES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

PAPERS RELATIVE TO THE ORGANIZATION OF THE MILITIA.

No. 1.

COPY OF A DESPATCH FROM GOVERNOR GORE BROWNE TO HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF
NEWCASTLE.

Government House,
Auckland, New Zealand,
5th July, 1861.

MY LORD DUKE,—

I have the honor to forward copies of certain Letters from Lieut.-General Cameron, C.B., relative to the organization of the New Zealand Militia, together with a Memorandum from the Colonial Secretary in reply.

No. 95.
MILITARY.

In a country occupied, as the North Island of New Zealand is, the organization of a Militia must always be a matter of great difficulty, and is extremely unpopular.

The European population of this Island was estimated at 40,159 in December, 1860; the adult male population cannot therefore be estimated at more than 8000; of these many are scattered over the country (especially in the North) whence they could never be collected, even if it were expedient to bring them away from their homes.

It would be useless to ask for Volunteers from the Middle Island or from the Australian Colonies because a Militia (though not less brave) is by no means as effective as the regular troops, and is three times as expensive when engaged at a distance from home.

I have in a previous Despatch explained that the employment of settlers (except close to their own houses) is also objectionable, because it must prevent their producing the revenue which enables the Colony to defray its share of the expenses of the war; and if they are taken from their occupations they must themselves become dependent on resources which would fail for want of their support.

The Colonial Secretary observes that under the Act which was repealed in 1860, there was a respectable Militia Force, and that it was not thought expedient to bring the new Act in force until a cessation of hostilities permitted the old Militia to be disbanded without danger, and gave time for a new one to be enrolled. The new Act therefore was not put in force until my return from Taranaki in March, and I find a Memorandum of mine, dated 22nd March, urging Ministers to place the Militia on the best and most efficient footing without loss of time. From that time I have constantly urged the subject verbally, and I trust that ere long the Militia will be made as effective as possible.

The number of Rifles and Muskets now belonging to the Colonial Government amounts to 5,560, and 1200 more rifles are expected in one of the first ships from England.

I have, &c.,

T. GORE BROWNE.

His Grace the Duke of Newcastle, K.G.,
&c., &c., &c.

Enclosure 1 in No. 1.

LIEUT.-GENERAL CAMERON TO GOVERNOR GORE BROWNE.

Auckland, 15th June, 1861.

SIR,—

As I understand that the General Assembly will shortly consider the subject of the Military defences of the Colony, I am desirous of bringing to your Excellency's notice an alteration that I would recommend being made in the present Militia Regulations by which the usefulness of that force will be increased.

Your Excellency is aware that should the troops advance far into the interior of the country, a very considerable number of men would necessarily be employed in guarding depots of supply, escorting convoys, furnishing drivers to the transport service, and occupying the different posts which must be established along the line of march to keep the communication open with the base of operations. If these duties devolve exclusively upon the regular troops, the force destined to act against the enemy would be most seriously reduced, and I need not point out to your Excellency how important it is that the Militia shall be available for some of the services that I have enumerated, and for which they would be well adapted. By the last Act, which limits the radius of Militia districts to fifteen miles, the Auckland Militia cannot be called upon for service beyond four or five miles south of Drury. In the event of an advance by Havelock it would be highly desirable that they should be available for duty as far as that point at least, but as it is not impossible that some other routes may be selected, I would recommend that the Law should be altered so that they may be liable for service, if necessary, in any part of the Province.

PAPERS RELATIVE TO THE

I am not aware that in any other Country the services of the Militia in time of war or rebellion are restricted to so limited an area as a circle of fifteen miles radius.

I have, &c.,

His Excellency Colonel Gore Browne, C.B.
&c., &c., &c.

D. A. CAMERON,
Lieut.-General.

Enclosure 2 in No. 1.

LIEUT.-GENERAL CAMERON TO GOVERNOR GORE BROWNE.

Head Quarters, Auckland,
16th June, 1861.

SIR,—

I trust that the great importance of the subject at the present time will excuse me with Your Excellency for so frequently troubling you about the Militia. I took the liberty some time ago of urging upon Your Excellency and the Colonial Government the expediency of taking immediate steps for the organization of an efficient body of Militia in every Province of the Colony, and at the same time requested that I might be furnished with any information with which Your Excellency could supply me on the subject.

I have since learnt from Your Excellency that the Auckland Militia has been enrolled and supplied with arms; but in regard to their numbers, their efficiency, or the measures proposed for training them to their duties, I have as yet no information whatever.

It is impossible to say how soon hostilities may recommence, and as in that event the duty of making arrangements for the defence of the Colony would devolve upon me, it is right that I should be made acquainted with all these matters as soon as possible. It is also desirable that I should have an early opportunity of inspecting the Auckland Militia, and of satisfying myself as to their condition, and how far they might be depended upon for any useful co-operation with Her Majesty's Troops.

I have, &c.,

His Excellency Colonel Gore Browne, C.B.,
&c., &c., &c.

D. A. CAMERON,

Enclosure 3 in No. 1.

LIEUT.-GENERAL CAMERON TO GOVERNOR GORE BROWNE.

Auckland, 1st July, 1861.

SIR,—

I am bound to give the Military Authorities at Home, by every opportunity, the fullest information on all matters relating to the defence of the Colony, and to the future probable operations of the Force under my command.

It will therefore become my duty to direct their attention by this Mail to the fact that at this critical juncture when every settlement in this Island is threatened with attack, the Militia has not been called out at any of them, except at Taranaki, where according to Major Herbert's Report, not more than 100 Militiamen can be considered fit for duty. I should wish to report if possible by this Mail, whether the Colonial Government have any intention of calling out the Militia; and if so, when; what the numbers will be in each settlement; and what steps they propose to take with the view of training and equipping it for service.

There is also another subject on which I am desirous of possessing and being able to give the Home Authorities some precise information. The reply of the insurgents to Your Excellency's last message leaves little room to hope any longer for a peaceful adjustment of our present differences with them, and I have therefore commenced preparations to enable me to carry the war into the Waikato country whenever you may think proper to order me to advance. An expedition into that territory should not be undertaken with a much smaller force than 3000 men. I could at present barely muster 2500 for the field, and, should any further detachments be made it will be impossible to attempt to carry out the object for which the Troops have been concentrated at this place.

I should feel obliged, therefore, if Your Excellency would inform me whether, in the event of an outbreak of hostilities you would call upon me to reinforce the garrisons of the different settlements, or whether you would have them to be defended by their present garrisons aided by the Militia.

I have, &c.,

His Excellency Colonel Gore Browne, C.B.,
&c., &c., &c.

D. A. CAMERON,
Lieut.-General.

Enclosure 4 in No. 1.

MEMORANDUM BY MR. STAFFORD.

Colonial Secretary's Office,
Auckland, 2nd July, 1861.

His Excellency's Ministers have had under their consideration the subject of the letter of the Lieutenant-General Commanding Her Majesty's Forces in New Zealand, of yesterday's date, in which

Lieutenant-General Cameron requests to be informed whether it is the intention of the Colonial Government to call out the Militia of the several settlements of the Northern Island, and if so when and in what numbers, and how it is proposed that they should be trained and equipped.

General Cameron also wishes to know whether, in the event of an outbreak of hostilities, he would be called on by your Excellency to reinforce the garrisons of the different settlements, or whether they would be left to be defended by their present garrisons aided by the Militia.

In order that Lieutenant-General Cameron may clearly understand the position of matters in connection with the Colonial Militia, and their capacity and liability to be employed in any military operations, which your Excellency and General Cameron may think it necessary to undertake, it appears desirable to explain.

1st. Why none but the Taranaki Militia are at present called out.

2nd. How the Militia force of New Zealand generally is constituted.

3rd. Within what limits only it can be employed, and for what uses it is fit.

1. The only place at which military operations have yet been carried on in New Zealand is at Taranaki, where the whole male population liable to the Militia have been on active service for about fifteen months. The present population at that place comprises about 500 males of between sixteen and fifty-five years, all of whom, with very few exceptions, are liable to serve, and are now on actual service. Of these about 200 are enrolled as Volunteer Corps, and having taken these picked men, and added the 100 of the Militia reported by Major Herbert as fit for duty, out of the 500 liable to serve in the Militia it is very probable that the remainder are not fit for active service. It is hardly to be expected that more than three-fifths of the whole population of any place would be fit for such service.

If General Cameron means by being "called out" that none but the Taranaki Militia have been on service in the field the statement is nearly correct, but if the term "called out" includes training and exercise it is altogether incorrect. The Militia of Auckland and Wanganui have all been called out, and a portion of the latter were for a time added to the strength of the garrison there. At Wellington also a portion of the Militia have been called out for service, and when the troops were withdrawn from that post they occupied the barracks there, and performed all the military duties previously performed by Her Majesty's regular troops. Portions of the Wellington Militia have also, until the last few weeks, formed two garrisons in the Hutt District.

When the Militia is called out for actual service it is of course necessary that it should be paid. This involves a large outlay in money, and a serious loss to the community, interrupting as it does the industrial occupation of the country. The effect of such a measure may be seen at Taranaki. While therefore, on the one hand, it is extremely desirable to put off so extreme a measure as long as possible, it is on the other hand no doubt necessary to be prepared for it whenever the circumstances are such as to justify its adoption.

To call out for actual service the whole Militia of the Northern Island of New Zealand, that is, every male between sixteen and fifty-five, with but few exceptions, would be justifiable only in a case of urgent necessity; but to have all who are fit for military duty prepared to undertake it in the event of such a necessity, is a wise and proper precaution.

2. The Militia force of New Zealand, as has already been stated, consists of every male inhabitant, with certain very limited exceptions, between the ages of 16 and 55—it thus includes every class.

A Militia Act was passed in 1858, and soon after, under its provisions, Volunteer Rifle Corps were established in several places, viz.:—Auckland, New Plymouth, Wellington, and Wanganui in the North Island; and at Nelson and Canterbury in the Middle Island; and they are still kept up in an efficient state. The Militia was also organized under that Act. In the session of 1860, however, an amended Act was passed prescribing a new classification for the Militia.

This Act was passed in November last, but it was appointed to come into operation at such time as the Governor should fix. There was a considerable Militia force then on foot; and, as its reconstruction would have had the effect of rendering it not available for immediate service for some time, it was deemed not prudent to break up the existing organization so long as actual hostilities were going on. Immediately, however, after the Governor's return from Taranaki, steps were taken to bring the new Act into operation, and the work of reorganization is actively going on throughout this island. In a few days the Militia of the Auckland district will be in a state to be called out for training and exercise, of which fourteen days' notice is required by the Act, and might have been so sooner had Colonel Mould, commanding that force, forwarded sooner, information with respect to the battalion divisions which he had been requested to furnish. It could be called out for actual service at once, but it would not be efficient for such service immediately; as, although many of the men have acquired a considerable proficiency as soldiers, there are many now classed with them who have everything to learn.

3. The Militia Act of 1860 prescribes that a Militia District shall not exceed thirty miles in diameter, and no Militia force can be taken for service out of its district. This, at first sight, may appear an undue limitation, but it must not be overlooked that such a Militia as that of New Zealand is not available for offensive operations; its utility and strength is for defence. It could under any circumstances be only used to a limited extent as an invading force, and if so used it would be very costly, as not only would the men require sufficient pay to provide themselves with food and clothing, but most of their families would have to be maintained at the public expense, while all industrial employment would be put an end to, and those who now yield the public a revenue, instead of being contributors to, would become dependent on the public funds. While, therefore, every consideration points to the impolicy of employing the Colonial forces for offensive operations, there is no doubt that for defensive purposes it may be made very effective.

E. W. STAFFORD.

THE DUKE OF NEWCASTLE TO SIR GEORGE GREY.

(No. 37.)

Downing-street, 26th April, 1862.

SIR,—

I have to inform you that I have received a communication from the Secretary of State for War, enclosing copy of a letter which had been addressed to him by General Cameron, in which, adverting to the employment of the troops in extending the road from Auckland to the Waikato river, as reported in your Despatch No. 2, of the 7th January, he calls attention to the fact that the annual training of the Militia force, as prescribed by local Ordinance, has been dispensed with, notwithstanding the critical position in which the colony has been placed for some time past.

I must express my surprise at the want of energy displayed by your Government in not using every effort to maintain the usefulness of a force which might render such valuable assistance, and I feel that I have a right, with such a fact before me, to assume that there are more soldiers in the colony than are required.

I have, &c.,

NEWCASTLE.

Governor Sir George Grey,
&c., &c., &c.

Memorandum by Mr. Fox.

Ministers regret that they were not aware of General Cameron's communication on this subject to Her Majesty's Government at the time when it was made, as they might have offered explanations which would have prevented misapprehension. The discontinuance of the Militia training occurred in the month of July or August, under Governor Browne's administration, and was attributable to two causes. First, the season of the year, being the depth of winter and the period of agricultural operations. Secondly, the certainty that any rigorous measures, such as alone could have ensured efficient training would, beyond all doubt, have depopulated the Provinces of the Northern Island, causing a general exodus to the Middle Island and Australia, already presenting the great attraction of unbounded gold fields far from native disturbances or other trouble. In short, had the training been enforced at that date, there would shortly have been few persons left in the Settlements of the Northern Island to be trained. The mere preparation for it caused such a panic that the whole of the labourers on some extensive farms are reported to have at once given notice to their employers to quit their service at a week's notice.

Another obstacle which has prevented the renewal of any attempt to train the Militia during the past year, has been the imperfect state of the law on the subject, which has rendered it impossible to organize an efficient local force.

The Government also, in January last (the date referred to in the Despatch), issued Regulations offering more liberal inducements than had previously existed for the formation of Volunteer corps throughout the colony, and a considerable number of men have enrolled themselves under those Regulations in the various Settlements and attend weekly parades for the purpose of training and exercise. The result of these regulations in the Province of Auckland was, that the Volunteers enrolled under them took garrison duties for six weeks in Auckland and enabled the General to detach one hundred and fifty more soldiers for the prosecution of the military road to the Waikato. The Government have also during the last year sent an order to England for 1000 Enfield Rifles (in addition to the 3000 previously supplied) for the purpose of arming the Militia and Volunteers in New Zealand.

Ministers propose to introduce Bills into the Assembly during the present session, which, it is hoped, may remove some of the existing difficulties and tend to the permanent establishment of a system of local defence. It must be borne in mind, however, that many of the difficulties which exist are such as no legislation can remove, and it is more than questionable whether the Militia of the Colony can be placed on such a footing as to satisfy the expectations of Military Officers who have been accustomed to older and less sparsely populated communities.

WILLIAM FOX.