

The check books, also required by the Regulations to be kept by the permanent staff, *i.e.*, the sergeants, and by which the capitation rolls of companies are to be checked, had, I found, been kept up in only two instances. The rule has been a dead letter. In fact the sergeants shirk keeping a check against their officers, and in one case one of them had the candour to tell me so. In one of the two instances where the book had been kept it was perfectly useless as a check, for the sergeant had only once during the twelve months been present at any parade of the company.

#### EQUIPMENT.

I had several representations made to me by officers commanding that they had not a sufficient number of arms for their men; also, as to the difficulties they experienced in getting their rifles repaired, chiefly from the want of some special person for the purpose. This, I think, might be rectified by the appointment in each large centre of a qualified person as arm repairer to the Volunteers, and to whom the men should be bound to take their arms for repair. The rifles that are now in use in many of the cadet corps were reported to me as quite unserviceable, and that it was positively dangerous to allow the lads to use them. Great coats do not appear to form part of a Volunteer's equipment. In a climate like this it is a most important and necessary article of clothing. If the men were ever called out they would not possibly take to camp life without them. The necessary camp equipage for each corps should also be kept complete.

#### MINIMUM.

With regard to the minimum now fixed at fifty, below which if a company falls in numbers it loses all claim to capitation, I consider this limit as a hard and fast line for all corps to be too high, its tendency being to hamper commanding officers and reduce their influence and authority, which should be increased rather than diminished, by compelling them to keep men on the rolls, for the capitation grant, whom they would otherwise rather be quit of. For instance, a corps may muster 60, all nominally efficient, but of these seven or eight may be quite the reverse and better out of the corps than in it, yet an officer would be very loth to strike these off as it would reduce his margin too near to his minimum number to allow for any unforeseen casualties occurring and so risk his capitation. I would suggest 30 as a minimum, and this would give greater latitude to officers to get rid of men whose worth as Volunteers was nil.

#### REDUCTION OF FORCE AND REORGANIZATION.

During my tour I endeavoured to gather as much information as possible on all points connected with the organization, training, and interior economy of the force, and the information thus gained, together with my own observations, has led me to this conclusion, that the Volunteer Force, as at present organized, is not efficient for the purposes for which a military force is maintained.

It is composed of a large number of men, only partially trained and drilled, and of officers, very many of whom though zealous in the movement are not fully qualified for the duties they may be called upon to perform, and who have not under the present constitution the necessary means and opportunities to enable them to qualify themselves. The force consists of a number of units acting independently and often at variance with each other. There is the want of an executive head, one fixed system, and a proper chain of responsibility from below upwards.

To attain such an organization as a military body to be efficient requires, would, with the present numerous and scattered force, necessitate a very great increase to the expenditure, and the question naturally arises—Is so large a force necessary for any contingency that, so far as can be foreseen is likely to occur? If this be answered in the negative, the next point to determine is whether it would not be wiser, and in every respect better, to have a smaller force, all ranks of which should be fully instructed in their duties, properly equipped, and only located at places where their services would be likely to be required, and from whence concentration in any direction might easily be effected, and which might be maintained at a considerable reduction on the present charges. I am of opinion that this would be a more satisfactory footing to place the force upon, both in view of eventualities that may arise and for the Volunteers composing it. The points for location are naturally indicated, *viz.*, Invercargill, Dunedin, Oamaru, Timaru, Christchurch, Picton, Blenheim, and Nelson, and the reductions I would propose are those of the outlying and inland corps, and also the cadet corps. These last so far as I have been able to gather do not as a rule answer the purpose for which I conclude they were organized—to act as feeders to the adult corps; I do not mean to imply that no cadets join the adult corps, but that the numbers that do so, are not in a fair proportion, nor in such a state of efficiency as to compensate for the expenditure incurred upon them.

I consider from the general intelligence of the population, that a recruit joining at seventeen or eighteen, would in twelve months or less be as efficient a member as a lad who had been drawing capitation from the age of twelve, and joined a corps at seventeen.

If the suggestions for reduction are approved of and details for revision of organization are required, these could be drawn out by a committee of experienced officers appointed under the orders of the Defence Office.

My recommendations as to cadet corps in no way refer to school corps, but these should not draw capitation, nor be put in uniform.

As it is manifestly to the interest of the Colony to encourage as many of the population as possible to become good marksmen, if the above reductions are carried out, Government aid should I think be given to the fullest extent to encourage the formation of rifle clubs, and member of clubs, aided and recognized by Government, might be allowed to compete for all prizes equally with Volunteers.

I regret that a sharp attack of illness, when in Southland, caused delay in the completion of my tour of inspection, and consequently in the sending in of this report.

I have &c.,

The Under Secretary for Defence,  
Wellington.

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Inspector of Volunteers, South Island.