

REPORT ON THE NEW ZEALAND PERMANENT AND VOLUNTEER FORCES.

YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

Defence Office, Wellington, 14th February, 1893.

I have the honour to forward herewith my report on the New Zealand Defence Forces and Defences, with my recommendations as to the future organization of the former and completion of the latter.

As soon as possible after my arrival in the colony I obtained an interview with the Hon. Minister of Defence, who introduced me to the Premier. At that interview I asked—(1) That sufficient time should be given to me to enable me to make a thorough inspection of the defences and all corps in the colony, and that I should have full opportunity of studying the organization at present existing before being called upon to make recommendations as to a future organization; (2) that I should not be called upon to take actual command of the Forces until I had sent in my report and recommendations; (3) that matters should be allowed to go on as heretofore, so that I might be able to see exactly how things were working. My requests were acceded to.

On the 13th December, 1892, I received a telegram from the Under-Secretary for Defence, intimating that the Minister wished for my report at latest by the end of January, and that he thought the inspections at out-of-the-way places immaterial.

Recognising the importance of submitting my report as early as possible in the present year, so that it might be fully considered before the meeting of Parliament, I wrote on the 13th December, 1892, the following letter to the Hon. the Defence Minister. This letter appears to have been mislaid, and it was not until the 1st February, 1893, that I obtained the reply of the Minister, as given beneath the letter:—

“SIR,—

“Milton, 13th December, 1892.

“I have this day received a telegram from the Acting Under-Secretary for Defence to the effect that you wish to get my report at latest by the end of next month, and that you think the inspections at out-of-the-way places immaterial. I will do my best to have my report ready for you by the end of January, but as such report must necessarily include a scheme for the reorganization of the New Zealand defence forces, for which purpose I was primarily brought to this colony, it is necessary that I should be given some indication as to the annual amount which the Government will think fit to recommend or sanction for the up-keep of its defences, and of its Permanent and Volunteer Forces. I shall be obliged if you will give me the information I desire at your earliest convenience, so that I may be in possession of the necessary data on which to base my recommendations.

“From the knowledge I have gained, I have great hopes of, with perhaps a small additional expenditure per annum, with the completion and placing in an efficient state the present works of defence, and with the supply of new rifles to the New Zealand Forces, putting the colony in a very much better state of defence than at present exists.

“I have, &c.,

“F. J. Fox, Colonel,

“Commandant, N.Z. Forces.”

The Hon. the Defence Minister, Wellington.

Minute on the above:—

“In giving a report upon the defences of the colony, and what in the Commandant's opinion is required to place the same in a proper and efficient state, I am of the opinion such report should be made without reference to Government as to amount available.—“R. J. S.—1/2/93.”

The reply of the Hon. the Defence Minister has thrown on me the burden of not only putting forward the recommendations which I deem absolutely necessary, but also of making those recommendations fit in with what I personally consider as the sum which it is right for the colony to spend in her defence. This is a very grave responsibility.

Believing that the colony cannot reasonably be called upon to spend more money on her defences than I have estimated, and recognising the absolute impossibility of having a more wide or extended form of defence, and at the same time an efficient one for that money, I have deliberately elected only to attempt the defence of the four chief ports and of the principal coaling-port.