

SESS. II.—1897.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEFENCE FORCES OF NEW ZEALAND

(REPORT ON THE), BY COL. A. P. PENTON, R.A., COMMANDER OF THE FORCES.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

To the Hon. the DEFENCE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Wellington, 1st September, 1897.

I have the honour to forward, for the information of His Excellency the Governor of New Zealand, a report on the Defence Forces of the colony.

I have now seen the majority of the dismounted corps in the colony, and travelled over all the districts excepting Westland. I am awaiting the return of Colonel Pitt from England before making a detailed inspection of his district.

The material of which the Forces is composed is, on the whole, excellent, and there is no reason why, with proper organization and encouragement, the troops should not become efficient and reliable.

I am sorry to say that I have found very few people in the colony who look upon the defence question seriously. It is usually treated very lightly by the majority of the people, and the probability of any attack being made on the colony by a foreign force is regarded as absolutely unlikely to happen, or to be such a remote contingency that it is not worth serious consideration. The recent examples we have had in the collapse of the Chinese and Greek Powers, owing to their want of preparedness and organization, should be a very serious object-lesson for the colony.

It must be remembered that foreign countries are getting closer and closer to us daily, owing to the continued improvements being made in the size and speed of ships, and that a descent by a few rapid cruisers belonging to a country geographically some thousands of miles away is not an absolute impossibility in these days.

THE PERMANENT FORCES.

As regards the Permanent Forces, there are not sufficient officers to keep up a proper spirit of discipline among the men. For the whole Force, there are only three for the Artillery and two for the Torpedo Corps. None of the Artillery officers have received any thorough training in artillery work, and I think it is greatly to their credit that the men are trained as well as they are. It is imperative that the number of officers should be increased as soon as possible; but, unless Imperial officers are obtained from England, I cannot see how this is to be done. The system at present in force of taking cadets from the Civil Service list is wrong in principle, and so far has not acted well: You get lads who have passed the Civil Service examination to accept military cadetships not for any love of soldiering, but for the sake of getting something to do out of their turn.

Officers should be men who have taken up the profession of arms from the love of it, and who have looked forward from their childhood to the day when they would be old enough to join the profession. The cadets, having been schoolmates and companions of many of the gunners in civil life, are not respected and looked up to by the men as they should be. I recommend that three Artillery officers be got out from Home at once, on a three years' engagement; and that notice should be given that a special examination will be held for military cadetships on a certain date for five military cadets, the examination to be as far as possible a similar one to that for entrance to Sandhurst; the cadets, on joining, to be put through a course of instruction at the dépôt at Wellington, to last one year, and after that to be sent Home and attached—five to the Royal Artillery and two to the Royal Engineers (the two cadets at present in the Force being included in this part of the arrangement) for one year. At the end of that time they would return to the colony, and be ready to take the places of the Royal Artillery officers on the expiration of their engagements. I would also very strongly advocate a Royal Engineer officer being got out as staff officer for submarine mining and fortifications; but unless a good salary is offered no Royal Engineer officer will be procurable.

The men of the Permanent Force are well instructed at the dépôt in Wellington, where they all join as recruits; but I regret having to report that I do not consider their state of discipline what it ought to be, nor do I think the men take the proper pride in themselves as soldiers which they should do. At the root of the evil is the system of wearing plain clothes, which is permitted on Sundays and in special cases, where they get permission to go outside the towns. This latter privilege is much abused; men get leave to wear plain clothes to go a short distance into the

country. They return to town, and hang about the town in plain clothes, instead of going back to barracks and changing into uniform. They take more pride in the style and fit of their plain clothes, and spend more money on them than they do on their uniform. Plain clothes should not be allowed unless under very special circumstances.

The organization of the Permanent Force, both No. 1 and No. 2 Companies, as regards grading, requires to be put on a sound footing. At present men, after serving a certain time, are promoted to second-class gunners, and again after that to first-class gunners, each promotion carrying a certain increase of pay. A man who has risen to be a first-class gunner, and is not smart enough, or does not care for further promotion to non-commissioned officer rank, has no incentive to work, or to keep himself proficient in his duties. He simply has to perform a certain amount of routine work each day to enable him to draw his pay. In the Imperial Service all gunners get the same pay, irrespective of their length of service, it depending entirely on their own exertions as to whether they have higher grading. Extra pay is given in the Royal Artillery to specialists who qualify themselves in the different branches of their profession, such as gun-layers, range-finders, position-finding specialists, machinery gunners, &c. These men all have to pass a qualifying examination previous to appointment, and are examined once a year as to their qualifications. If a man has not kept himself up in his work he is disgraced, and not appointed again until he has made himself efficient. I recommend that this system should be carried out here, no further appointments being made to first- or second-class gunners. In No. 2 Company the same course should be followed, the extra pay being given to electricians, engineers, tradesmen, &c.

According to the present regulations every man in the Force is allowed to marry on obtaining the consent of his commanding officer. Out of a total strength of 178, in No. 1 Company, sixty-five are married; and in No. 2, out of seventy-two, thirty-nine are married. The presence of a large proportion of married men in a Force does not tend to raise its military efficiency. The men think more of their own homes and families than they do of their duties to the State. There are few married quarters available, and consequently all these married men have to live out of barracks, and away from the discipline and control of their officers and non-commissioned officers. Apart from this, considerable expense is incurred when men are moved from one station to the other in the transport of their wives and families: and a man who has a settled home is loth to break it up and leave it on transfer to another station. A fixed establishment should be laid down as to the number of married men to be allowed in each company.

I would suggest the following rules:—

- (1.) Sergeants and higher ranks to be allowed to marry.
- (2.) Below this rank 10 per cent. of the strength of the Force to be borne on the married roll.

The qualifications for the married roll to be,—

- (1.) A minimum of five years' service.
- (2.) A very good character.
- (3.) Life insured for at least £100.

Men borne on the married roll would, on transfer from station to station, have their families and luggage carried free by the State.

The artificers in No. 1 Company, who look after the repairs of guns, small-arms, &c., should be put on the same footing as the armament artificers in the Imperial Service—that is, they should be granted the rank of sergeant, without any increase in their present rate of pay.

There is a want of properly-qualified artillery instructors. Up till this month there has been only one in the colony, Master Gunner Richardson, who, in addition to his duties as instructor, performs those of master gunner. Sergeant-major Burbury has just arrived from England, and has been sent to Lyttelton to act as instructor to the Permanent Force and Volunteers in the South Island. I recommend that an additional one be applied for at once. This would give one for the North Island, one for the South Island, and one for the dépôt at Wellington, to perform, in addition, the work of master gunner.

The system of letting men go from the Permanent Force to the Police, and then counting on them as a reserve in case of war, is fallacious and unworkable. In the event of an attack on the country the police would be required to do their own special work every bit as much as the troops would theirs. The police cannot be spared for a sufficient time each year to enable them to keep up their training as efficient soldiers, or to make any progress in the duties of artillerymen. I consider it is a fatal error to look upon them as a reserve for the Permanent Force in war-time.

Men of the Permanent Force are called upon to do police duty on special occasions for days together. This is detrimental to the discipline of the Force, and should be discontinued.

The men of the Permanent Force are enlisted for no special period of time. They are sworn in to serve in the Defence Force until lawfully discharged. A few of the non-commissioned officers and men now in the Force have served for over thirty years, whilst the majority of them are men of a few years' service. I am of opinion that the men should be enlisted for a fixed period—so many years with the colours, and so many with the reserve. Any man wishing to take his discharge before completing his period of service with the colours might, if circumstances permit, be allowed to do so at the discretion of the authorities by converting the unexpired portion of his colour service into reserve service, the reserve men to attend a certain number of drills annually at the head-quarters of the district in which they may be residing. The period with the colours should not be less than five years.

I consider that there should be a sufficient number of gunners in the Permanent Force to work all the breech-loading guns, range-finding instruments, quick-firing guns, communications, &c., at each of the four ports. It is essential that the men who have to work the most important guns and their appliances should be thoroughly trained, and available at a moment's notice. Under present conditions this cannot be the case with the Volunteers, who only get a limited training

during the year. There should also be a sufficient number of men in No. 2 Company to efficiently supervise the laying-out and to work all the mine-fields provided for the defence. To carry out this proposal, the following establishment of non-commissioned officers and men would be required:—

No. 1 Company.

	Non-commissioned Officers.	Distance Range-finders (Specialists).	Telephonists.	Gunners.	Total.
Wellington	16	18	17	108	159
Auckland	12	12	9	93	126
Lyttelton	10	12	7	48	77
Dunedin	6	10	5	38	59
Total	44	52	38	287	421

No. 2 Company.

Non-commissioned officers	20
Gunners, with pay of first class (of which twenty-eight are engine-drivers, electricians, and artificers)	32
Gunners, with pay of second class (chiefly composed of specialists)	16
Gunners, with pay of third class (training for specialists, and performing submining work)	28
Total	96

For the actual work of laying out the mine-fields the services of the Volunteer Navals would have to be called in, the above establishment being the specialist establishment for working and supervising laying-out of fields.

The Naval Volunteers can only be looked upon as a reserve for the Permanent Force. In war-time the garrisons of the various works would have to be at their posts day and night, vigilant and ready to act at a moment's notice. The strain on the men would be intense, and at the outset an attack might be made so suddenly as to preclude the auxiliaries having received sufficient training to fight the works successfully. You could not count on all your Volunteers turning out immediately on the outbreak of war; and on this account alone you should have a sufficient number of trained men available for duty at once in case of emergency.

VOLUNTEERS.

The Permanent Force, in case of war, would be available at once for service in the passive defence of the four ports; but the Volunteers will have to be relied upon for a large part of this defence, and for the whole of the active defence of the colony. It is not to be expected that an attacking enemy would try to run his ships past the forts and mines whilst they were intact, but rather would try to land a force to capture the forts before running his ships in.

The forts, mine-fields, &c., are provided to keep enemy's ships away from certain ports, to insure safe havens for our own warships to coal and recruit in, and to allow merchant-ships to load and to collect into convoys without interference. It is essential that you should have such fortified ports, and it is also essential that you should have a sufficient number of troops available at each port to secure the safety of the forts, and prevent their being taken by a land attack. In the confidential portion of my report I have entered into the state of the defences of the several ports.

According to the returns up till the end of July, the Volunteer Force consists now of eighty-six corps, comprising 5,121 officers, non-commissioned officers, and men, made up as follows: Three Cavalry Corps, 172 men; nine Mounted Rifles Corps, 518 men; fifteen Naval Artillery Corps, 1,004 men; one Garrison Artillery Corps, 63 men; nine Field Artillery Corps, 512 men; two Engineer Corps, 138 men; forty-six Rifle Corps, 2,667 men; one honorary corps, 47 men. Of these, two corps of Mounted Rifles and two corps of Rifles are disbanding, one corps of Navals and two Field Batteries are being turned into Rifles.

As regards the mounted troops:—

Of the three corps of cavalry, one is in the Wanganui district, one in Canterbury, and one at Dunedin. This country is for the most part not suitable for cavalry, and these corps will be most useful as Mounted Infantry. Orders have already been issued to arm them with the Martini-Henry rifle.

There are eight corps of Mounted Infantry scattered over the two islands. With the long extent of coast-line to defend, Mounted Infantry would be a most useful arm, and I consider that efforts should be made to increase this arm. In the Auckland District the formation of one mounted corps has just been sanctioned. Proposals will, I hope, very shortly be put forward for the formation of two or three more corps in this district. With the length of coast-line it would be necessary to watch in the defence of Auckland, it is essential that there should be a strong force of Mounted Infantry available for the defence. In war-time none could be spared from other districts.

On my recommendation, orders have been issued to withdraw the carbines and issue Martini-Henry rifles to all the mounted corps. Their use in war will be that of a body of infantry soldiers capable of being transferred rapidly from one position to another, to act as infantry, and not as cavalry.

The mounted corps as a rule go into camp for six days in each year, and have very little other training.

Every opportunity should be taken to get the mounted corps to brigade together. They should be encouraged to hold their corps camps at the same time, and as many corps as possible at the same place. This has been arranged for as regards all the corps in the Wellington District this year, and I have put forward proposals for the corps in the South Island.

The men composing the mounted corps are mostly farmers and men working on farms and runs. It is only at certain seasons of the year, when shearing, ploughing, sowing, harvesting, &c., are not going on, that the men can be got together for parade. Owing to these circumstances, I have so far only seen one mounted corps, so cannot say anything definite as to the efficiency of this arm.

Of the thirteen corps of Naval Artillery, one is at the Thames, one is at Napier, one at Wanganui, one at the Bluff and Invercargill, and two in Westland District. At none of these places are there either mines or forts, and the corps cannot get instruction in artillery or submarine mining work. They have been warned that they will have to provide themselves with the new uniform and turn into rifle companies by the end of the year.

The Naval Corps at the centres are trained in artillery and submarine mining work, as far as possible in the places they would have to occupy in the time of war. They take much interest in their work, and are a smart body of men. The training in the forts is necessarily almost entirely confined to the fortnight annually during which they are in camp.

Of the nine Field Batteries, two have already been turned into Infantry corps. The Batteries at Napier and Invercargill should also be converted into Rifle Corps. The officer commanding the battery at Napier has informed me that this will be done as regards his battery at the end of the year. This will leave us with five field batteries: one at each centre, and one in the Nelson District.

Field-guns should play an important part in the defence scheme. They would be most useful against any cruisers which might be attempting an attack or a landing in boats—in fact, no serious defence could possibly be carried on unless assisted by mobile field-guns. I most strongly urge that four field batteries, complete with wagons, harness, and full equipment, be ordered at once from Home. They should be similar in every respect to the guns now being supplied to the Royal Artillery. One battery should be kept in each centre. I should very much prefer to see these batteries manned by permanent men and horses kept by the State. If this is found impossible on the score of expense, then the Volunteers who would have them in charge should be enlisted on special terms, and arrangements should be made for their turning out mounted of an afternoon at least twice a month for two hours' drill. The period of their annual camp should be extended to a fortnight.

On receipt of the four modern batteries, the Nordenfeldt guns and equipment at present in possession of the D Battery at Wellington may perhaps be handed over to the H Battery in the Nelson District. At any rate, they will come in useful as part of the movable armament of ports.

Under existing regulations the Field Batteries cannot earn their capitation unless they complete the same course of musketry as the Infantry corps. For this purpose a certain number of rifles were issued to each battery, and were in nobody's particular charge; consequently, the arms were not properly looked after, and many got damaged. The efficiency of Field Artillery does not depend on their knowledge how to shoot with a rifle: their duty is to their guns, and their guns only. The regulations on this head should be amended at once. The rifles are being withdrawn from the Field Batteries, and carbines issued, on the scale laid down for Field Batteries in the Imperial Service—twelve per battery. Each gunner should be put through a modified course of carbine practice, as laid down for the Artillery in the Imperial Service, and, if considered advisable, the Field Batteries might compete among themselves for prizes.

Carbines are being issued to the Permanent Force, and the Naval Artillery Volunteers should get them as soon as there are a sufficient number available. They have quite enough to do to learn their Artillery drill and fire-discipline without being called upon to carry out an elaborate course of musketry instruction. The amount of carbine practice they should be called upon to perform should be based upon that of the Royal Artillery Imperial Forces. For prizes they should compete amongst themselves.

The forty-six Infantry corps are scattered all over the colony. Only in very few stations are there more than two corps together. Some of the stations are very isolated and not easy of access, and the corps in such stations cannot get proper and systematic instruction; nor do they, except on the occasion of the Easter camps, ever get a chance of working with other corps in tactical combination. Such corps would not be fit to take the field on an emergency, and can only be looked upon as a reserve.

On mobilization all the country corps would be brought into each of the four centres, and it would happen that in each centre you would have a number of small corps with no cohesion, and no experience of working together, the result being confusion, and valuable time taken up in organization. In each of the four big districts I consider that you should have two battalions of eight companies each. Each battalion should have its own commanding officer and adjutant, the battalion being administered through the commanding officer. He should be responsible to the Officer Commanding the District for the efficiency of his battalion, and should visit the outlying companies as often as possible, whilst arrangements should be made for the companies to be brought together for battalion exercise periodically. This would cost the State but little, the railways being mostly State property, and the benefit to the efficiency of the Volunteer Force would be very great.

No new corps should be formed in isolated stations, nor in stations which are not closely connected by rail with those in which corps already exist.

Efforts should be made to strengthen the number of corps in each of the four centres, and in each district (except Nelson) I should like to see one battalion complete in the principal port, and

one battalion in the country district, with its head-quarters easily accessible by rail to the port, and its companies located within such a distance of each other as to be able to be collected occasionally at a central spot for afternoon battalion drill and field exercise.

The establishment for each of the four districts should be as follows: A sufficient force of Navals to man all the guns and mine-fields at the ports, with the assistance of the Permanent Force, four companies of Mounted Rifles, one town battalion of Rifles (eight companies), one country battalion of Rifles, one Field Battery, one company of Engineers, one company ambulance corps.

In districts where more than four companies of Mounted Rifles could be raised, I should like to see a battalion of eight companies of Mounted Rifles, the two infantry battalions being reduced by two companies each.

I will make further recommendations as regards the Nelson District after Colonel Pitt's return from England.

In many of the small stations I find that the Rifle corps consist largely of men who live in the outlying districts, at some distance from head-quarters, and it is no uncommon thing for a man to have to ride twenty-five or thirty miles to put in an evening drill. This, although it speaks well for the zeal and patriotism of the Volunteers, is not good for the efficiency of the corps; it makes the drill-musters of the corps small, and prevents any out-door instruction being given. I do not consider that corps should be encouraged to enlist men who live more than five miles from head-quarters.

As at present constituted, the Volunteer Force is efficient up to a certain point, the limit being practically what can be taught in the drillsheds. Six days' company camp is allowed each year, during which time the men can be drilled in the field in the mornings and evenings, without interfering with their daily avocations. Easter camps are also held, the working duration of which is practically three days. These camps are most valuable institutions, and are really the only occasions on which the Volunteers get any field training. No troops can be really efficient or in proper fighting condition unless they get a great deal more field training than the Volunteers do at present.

The Volunteers do not turn out to drill of an afternoon for several reasons. In a corps composed of sixty men, there are, of course, men of different trades and callings, serving under different employers. There is no general half-holiday in the week on which all the men can be got together; some tradesmen closing their establishments on Wednesday, some on Saturday. In addition to this, the employers do not give any facilities to the Volunteers in their employ for getting away to attend drill; and, in fact, as a rule, do not in any way encourage the Volunteer movement. In this country, with but few exceptions, every male inhabitant between the ages of seventeen and fifty-four is liable to serve in the Militia when called upon to do so, and the employers of labour should bear in mind that the men in their service who are doing Volunteer duty are acting as an insurance against they themselves being called upon to perform military service.

The attractions of racing, football, cricket, boating, &c., also militate against the attendance of many men on half-holidays.

The spirit of the men is excellent, and, with more encouragement from the Government, I feel sure they would not hesitate to make themselves thoroughly efficient. The regulations provide for each man putting in three whole afternoon parades during the year before he can be counted as an "efficient." The days at Easter camp are allowed to reckon towards this; and a morning and evening's drill put in whilst a corps is in company camp is counted (by Circular No. 29, published 16th October, 1896,) as a whole afternoon drill. Each Volunteer can thus capitate without putting in any afternoon drill but that which he goes through whilst at camp.

More encouragement should be given to the men to turn out for afternoon drills during the year. This encouragement, I think, must take the shape of a pecuniary one to the corps. An extra amount of capitation should be given to every corps turning out to an afternoon parade in excess of the three required by regulation when three-fourths of their number are present, a certain number of such parades being held annually to entitle them to this extra capitation—say, one a month—the parade to be essentially a field, and not a drillshed parade. In stations where two or more infantry corps exist they should be paraded together. It is essential that training should be given as much as possible in field manoeuvres. The drillshed work simply prepares a man for the training he should get in the field to turn him into an efficient soldier.

The Volunteer officers, as far as I have seen, are not as well up in their work as they ought to be, but I understand that they are improving, and in the great majority of cases are taking much interest in their work. They suffer, in common with their men, from the want of proper and efficient instruction. There are not a sufficient number of instructors in the country, and many of those who are out here are useless and past their work.

I consider that three Infantry officers should be got out from the Imperial Forces. These officers should possess a certificate from the School of Musketry, and have passed through the Mounted Infantry course at Aldershot.

In addition, each district and each battalion should have a sergeant instructor. This would make a total of seventeen infantry instructors, as the districts are at present constituted, allowing one battalion for the Nelson District, and one extra instructor for the Wellington District:

SMALL-ARMS AMMUNITION.

Constant complaints have been made as to the quality of the ammunition supplied to the troops. The complaint comes from all parts of the colony.

The Colonial Ammunition Company are under contract to supply the whole of the small-arm ammunition required for the Forces of the colony. The specification they work to is not such a severe one as is in force in England. The powder is ordered by the Government from Home, and

is supposed to have passed the same tests, under the supervision of Imperial officers, as the powder supplied for the manufacture of Martini-Henry ammunition for the Imperial Service. The Colonial Company contended that the powder was not good, and attributed the failures of the ammunition chiefly to that cause. On my recommendation five hundred rounds of ammunition from each month's manufacture in 1896 were sent to England for proof and examination by the Government experts. The report of the tests lately received shows that the inferiority of the ammunition is not due to the powder, but to irregularities in manufacture. I expect shortly to receive a further report after a chemical analysis of the materials of which the cartridges are built up.

The Colonial Company have asked that samples of powder from certain lots received in the colony should be sent Home for examination. These samples should have gone Home at the same time as the cartridges for examination, but the shipping companies are most unwilling to carry powder on the homeward voyage, and we actually received the report on the examination of the cartridges before the powder was shipped from the colony.

There are but scanty facilities for carrying out the conditions of the specification as regards the proof of the finished ammunition. On my recommendation velocity instruments have been ordered out from England, but there is no officer in the Colonial Force who possesses sufficient knowledge to set these instruments up and work them. I will, as far as possible, supervise the setting-up of these instruments, and give the necessary instruction, until an expert can be got out from England to take the work over. One of the officers from the Permanent Force should be sent to England for instruction in the examination and proof of warlike stores under the Chief Inspector at Woolwich. On his return to this country he should receive the appointment of testing officer, being given extra pay for the performance of this duty.

As regards the ammunition now in store, it should be used up as soon as possible, being replaced by a good and serviceable supply.

I suggested to the company that they should take back what is known to be bad of our present stock; but this they refused to do, alleging that as it had passed the tests we put it to here, and had been accepted by the Government, their responsibility ended.

In testing ammunition, only a small percentage can actually be put through the firing-test, and it is on the performance of this percentage that the ammunition is accepted or rejected. The testing officer has, to the best of my knowledge, done his work conscientiously, and the percentage of rounds tested has been in accordance with the terms of the specification.

Every possible step in reason should be taken to insure a supply of reliable ammunition; the very existence of the colony may some day depend on this, and, although the Government is bound by contract for some years still to obtain their supply of small-arm ammunition from the Colonial Company, still, I think that, in case of necessity, they should not hesitate to obtain from other sources a supply of reliable ammunition.

It would be more advisable I think, in future, if the company supplied their own powder and all component parts, as recommended by my predecessor in his report for 1896, so as to obviate any divided responsibility for the quality of the supply.

The troops are being supplied with "rolled case" ammunition. This quality of ammunition is very liable to damage in the men's pouches, and if damaged or covered with dust it is liable to jamb in the rifle, and render a rifle useless at perhaps a critical moment. It would be advisable to arrange for the future supply to be "solid drawn." I understand that the cost of the latter would be about £1 more per thousand than that of the "rolled case," and the extra cost would be quite worth incurring. In the Imperial Service the "rolled case" is not now used.

UNIFORMS.

The dress regulations lay down that the uniforms for all Volunteer corps excepting the Naval Volunteers should be practically of the same pattern, the mounted corps wearing cord pantaloons instead of the blue Zouave trousers worn by the dismounted corps. The colour and facings of all jackets is to be the same, and the only difference between the several branches is to be the badge of the arm of the service worn on the collar. I much regret that this decision has been arrived at, more especially as regards the colour and material.

In the Imperial Service each branch is clothed in peace time with a distinctive dress, but when proceeding on active service the troops are put into kharkee uniform, their caps, buttons, and the badges on the shoulder cords differing according to the branch of the service the men belong to. The Imperial soldier has thus two dresses—one for peace and the other for war—both being supplied by the State. In this colony, where all the uniforms are bought and kept out of the capitulation allowed to corps, it is not possible to provide and keep in store a set of active-service uniforms for each man. The uniform which the soldier in this colony wears on ordinary parades would be the one which he would have to fight in, and should be the most suitable one for that purpose. Undoubtedly, the colour best for this service is kharkee, and I think it is a matter for regret that the Conference of 1894 should have decided on the present uniform.

Several of the Infantry corps have supplied themselves with the new uniform, and it would not be fair to ask them to make another change at present. All the corps should have the new uniform by the end of this year. So far, however, only one corps of Mounted Infantry are supplied with it, and I recommend that kharkee be adopted as the service colour for the uniforms of the mounted troops, the cut and pattern to correspond with that issued to the troops sent to England for the Imperial celebrations; the helmet for mounted corps to be superseded by the felt hat with brim turned up at one side.

In the Auckland District only one corps, so far, has provided itself with the new uniform. The other corps in the district require new uniform, and three new corps have just been formed. All the corps in the district are desirous of wearing kharkee uniform, and on this account, and for climatic reasons, I strongly recommend that their wishes be met, and that kharkee be adopted as the universal dress for that district.

Whilst adhering to the universal dress for all but the mounted corps and the Auckland District, I consider that the different battalions should adopt distinctive badges and facings, so that one battalion may be distinguishable from another, each arm of the service having its distinctive badge.

The undress head-gear for all corps is the field-service cap. This is entirely unsuited for mounted corps. The cap, to look smart and soldier-like, should be worn on the side of the head; but, when a man is mounted, unless his cap is exceptionally well made, it has to be pressed down on the centre of the head to enable him to keep it on. It is not a smart head-dress, and is not suitable for any class of troops working over rough ground. It soon gets out of shape, and only looks smart when new. It should be abolished.

The Conference of 1894 decided that all belts should be of brown leather. The companies who have provided themselves with the new uniform expected to have brown belts issued to them, and to return the buff belts to store. Unfortunately, this recommendation of the Conference has not been acted upon, and there is only a small stock of brown belts in store from which to make issue. To supply the whole Force with brown belts would mean a serious expenditure.

I quite concur with Colonel Fox's recommendation in his last year's report that an allowance should be made to corps for the supply of great-coats.

Very few of the corps have haversacks or water-bottles. These, of a universal pattern, should be procured, and a free issue made.

MEDICAL.

There is no organized method for supplying medical aid to troops in case of war. In framing the defence scheme for the colony this matter will have to be gone into thoroughly. Any fighting likely to occur will probably be near one of the principal ports, and arrangements should be made for the formation of a small medical staff corps at each centre, to be supplied with the necessary appliances for giving first aid to the wounded in the field. Hospital accommodation will have to be considered, and I recommend that a small committee of medical officers belonging to the Volunteer Force should be assembled to discuss these questions.

Surgeon-General Grace has been in communication with the Volunteer medical officers throughout the colony on this subject, and has elicited some replies and suggestions.

CADET COMPANIES.

These companies are valuable from the point of view that a certain amount of military knowledge is imparted to a section of the youthful community. The corps themselves would be of little value as fighting units, the boys being too young to bear the fatigue of active service. A proportion of them, after leaving school, join the adult corps, and thus utilise the military knowledge they gained as cadets. The majority, however, do not join the Volunteer Corps, and I consider the expense of their training as cadets should be born by the educational and not by the military department.

At present there are thirty-nine cadet corps in the colony, with a total strength of 2,138.

SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION.

I most strongly recommend that a school of instruction be formed at Wellington for the Volunteer Force. Both officers and men should be encouraged to come to Wellington for short courses during the year. The Volunteers could be accommodated in barracks, and treated in the same manner as the men who have been trained lately for service in England. If each corps sent a few men during the year, the benefit to the Volunteers throughout the colony would be very material.

CAMPS.

On account of Easter being so late this year, and seeing that bad weather had been experienced during the last three years at the Easter camps, I recommended, and received approval, to postpone the general encampments until a later period of the year, when finer weather might be hoped for. The weather was excessively bad at Easter; and certainly in the North Island, and in some parts of the South Island, it would have been impossible to hold an encampment.

I have made careful inquiries from all commanding officers, and find that Easter is the most convenient time for holding encampments, and very much regret that the Volunteers cannot see their way to go into camp at some such time as Christmas or New Year, when the days are long and the weather assured.

I have recommended that for this year combined company camps should as far as possible be held at the centres, and country corps be invited to attend. Any Volunteer remaining in camp for four whole days to receive an allowance of 2s. 6d. per diem.

RAILWAY COMMUNICATION.

On strategetic grounds, efforts should be made to complete the railway communication between Auckland and Wellington, and also between the east and west coasts of the South Island. Until this is done, the rapid concentration of troops at a threatened point is impossible.

AMENDMENT TO DEFENCE ACT.

The Defence Act requires amendment, and should be taken in hand this session. Authority should be given under it to the representative of the colony in England to enter into agreement (when authorised to do so by the Government) with officers and non-commissioned officers of the Imperial Force for employment in the colony. The powers and duties of the Commander of the Forces should be defined. Authority should be given to the Officers Commanding Districts to order the commanding officers of corps to inflict fines for offences against discipline already laid down in the Act.

The appointment of officers to the Volunteer Force should be made by the military authorities, and not, as at present, by election of the men. The Volunteer Regulations have been altered in this latter respect, but so far the Defence Act has remained unamended. It is a most important matter for the efficiency and discipline of the Volunteer Force that this should be done.

The Defence Act provides that all the male inhabitants of New Zealand (with a few exceptions) between seventeen and fifty-five years of age shall be liable to serve in the Militia. I recommend that steps should be taken to draw up lists in each district of all the male inhabitants subject to the classes mentioned in paragraph 22 of the Act, and that these lists should be revised at stated periods.

MUSKETRY INSTRUCTION.

Sufficient attention is not given to practising the men in firing under service conditions. Much encouragement is given to men who are good individual shots, and no doubt the attractions of the rifle-range induce many men to become Volunteers. What is wanted, however, is to teach them to shoot under conditions as near as possible similar to those they would meet with when on active service. We should endeavour to raise the quality of shooting of the whole Force, and not to confine ourselves to encouraging only the "crack" shots in the Force.

Many of the ranges are confined and unsuitable for practice in field-firing. Near most of the towns land is available for ranges, and the Government should give every assistance to the Volunteers to enable them to perfect themselves in the most important part of their training.

The Government has granted considerable assistance to the New Zealand Rifle Association in the past. If this is to be continued in the future, I consider the meeting should be carried out under the authority and supervision of military authorities, and that prizes should be given for field-firing.

TRANSPORT AND COMMISSARIAT.

There are no arrangements for either of these services, nor for the supply of ammunition in the field. At each centre arrangements should be entered into with one of the carrying companies to provide, in case of necessity, pack-horses and carts sufficient to meet the requirements of the Field Force for carriage of tents, baggage, and ammunition. Each company of Rifles should make provision for the supply of two pack-horses for the carriage of reserve ammunition.

At each centre a contract should be entered into annually for the supply of provisions to the Field Force in case of necessity.

DIVISION OF MILITARY DISTRICTS.

By a notice which appeared in the *Gazette* on the 28th February, 1895, the colony was divided into five military districts for administrative purposes. This was in accordance with the recommendation made by Colonel Fox, and approved by the Military Conference of 1894. The districts were as follow: Auckland, Wellington, Nelson, Canterbury, and Otago. The first four districts have been kept intact, but the Otago District has been split up into three independent commands—North Otago, South Otago, and Southland. This is a retrograde step, and I recommend that the Otago District should be at once re-formed as in 1895. Unless this is done, the battalion system cannot be satisfactorily carried out in that part of the colony. The North Otago District is composed of only four corps, and the Southland District of seven corps.

The officer at present commanding the South Otago District should be given the command of the entire Otago District, the present districts of North Otago and Southland being formed into sub-districts of that command.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, I would urge that the matter of military reforms may be dealt with from the broad point of view of benefit to the colony at large, and that the claims of any special districts which may interfere with the great question of defence should be made subservient to the greater claims of the united colony.

I have, &c.,

A. P. PENTON, Colonel,
Commander New Zealand Forces.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (1,650 copies), £4 18s.

By Authority: JOHN MACRAX, Government Printer, Wellington.—1897.

Price, 6d.]