

1898.

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.

Colonel A. P. PENTON, Commanding New Zealand Forces, to the Hon. the DEFENCE MINISTER.
SIR,—

Defence Office, Wellington, 30th August, 1898.

I have the honour to forward, for the information of His Excellency the Governor and Commander-in-Chief of New Zealand, my annual report on the defence forces of the colony.

Since the date of forwarding my last report, owing to the war between Spain and America, much attention has been paid to the military position in this colony, and there appears to me to be a genuine and general desire to put the defences and the forces of the colony into a trustworthy and efficient state. That every effort should be made to carry this out speedily I cannot too strongly urge.

PERMANENT FORCES.

I reported last year that there were not sufficient officers in the Permanent Force to keep up the proper spirit of discipline among the men. Steps have been taken to somewhat remedy this. An Imperial officer has been engaged to take charge of the artillery defence at Auckland, and the two gentlemen who were probationary cadets last year have been given commissions as lieutenants in the Permanent Artillery. These two young officers have been sent to England to undergo a course of instruction, and on their return to the colony the experience and knowledge they will have gained will no doubt materially assist them to educate and train in their military duties the men over whom they will be placed in command. I should have been very glad had my recommendations to get out three artillery officers instead of one from the Imperial service on a three years' engagement been accepted, as there is ample work for them to do in the colony.

Two cadets have been recently appointed to the Force, and I understand that it is in contemplation to make one further appointment. Two of the cadets will be trained for artillery work, and the third for submarine mining work, and I venture to hope that when their turn comes these three cadets will also be sent to England for instruction.

The only qualification so far insisted upon for a cadet has been that a lad should have passed the Junior Civil Service Examination. I again recommend that a special examination should be established for candidates wishing to join the military service, and that due notice should be given of the date of such examination so that we might get officers fitted, and with a taste, for military life.

The question of wearing plain clothes by the men has been somewhat modified during the past year. Men are now allowed to wear plain clothes on Sundays and on one evening during the week, also on special occasions. I do not consider that any further modifications are at all desirable; discipline would suffer, and the men should rather be encouraged to take a pride in their uniforms and in themselves as soldiers.

In my last report I recommended an increase to the Permanent Force, so that the working of the principal guns in our defences and all the specialist details of the forts should be carried out by efficient and well-trained men. The proposal met with much opposition in Parliament and elsewhere, but I think it my duty to again urge upon the authorities the necessity of an addition to the artillery branch of the Permanent Force. The idea that the colony is to be handed over to "militarism" because of the necessary numbers of men being asked for to work the principal guns, &c., of the existing defences is absurd. It takes much time and training to make an efficient garrison artilleryman, and the Permanent Force is all that can be relied on to work the forts at all times of the year and under all conditions. The Volunteers from lack of sufficient work in the forts would not be competent at once to take their place in the defence. The men are willing and eager to learn, but have not the required opportunities, and it is only after their annual fortnight's training that they are fitted to efficiently work the guns.

No decision has been arrived at with regard to the recommendation for putting the grading and rating of the men on a sound footing.

In No. 1 Company it is essential that we should have efficiently-trained specialists for the several duties connected with the artillery defence. As the Force is at present constituted there is no inducement, beyond that of possible future promotion to non-commissioned officer rank, to induce

a gunner to keep himself efficient as a specialist. As there are rarely likely to be vacancies in the non-commissioned-officer rank, the prospects of promotion are not great. All the first-class gunners should be specialists, liable to be reduced in rank if they do not keep themselves well up in their work. It is on these specialists that the efficient working of the forts very largely depends, and every inducement should be given to them to keep themselves efficient.

In No. 2 Company we have a very serious dearth of tradesmen such as electricians, engine-drivers, carpenters, and blacksmiths. It is essential for the efficient carrying out of the submarine mining work and the care and up-keep of the various stores and engines that we should have a sufficiency of such tradesmen. The present rate of pay seems too low to attract men of good capabilities to the ranks, and steps should be taken at the very earliest opportunity to remedy the present state of affairs.

I recommend that as suggested for No. 1 Company the rank of first-class gunner should be kept for men who qualify themselves as specialists, and that a man should be liable to be reduced in pay if he does not keep himself up in his work.

The Government of New South Wales invited this Colony to send any officers or non-commissioned officers of the artillery branch of the Permanent Force to undergo a course of instruction lasting for about three months in Sydney. I recommended that advantage should be taken of this offer, and am sure had this been carried out that the men would have got very valuable instruction at a small cost, and that money so spent would have been of benefit to the colony. Unfortunately my recommendation was declined. Should a similar offer be made at any future time I hope that the authorities will see their way to take advantage of it.

Owing to the installation of a new mine-field and increased electric-light plant, it will be absolutely necessary to make a slight increase to No. 2 Company, which I have asked for in the estimates.

The name of "Gunner" is not suitable to a man doing entirely submarine-mining work, and the men of No. 2 Service Company should be designated "Sappers," and not "Gunnery."

My recommendation that a fixed rule should be laid down as to the number of married men to be allowed in each company has not been acted on, and men are practically allowed to marry as they please, and in some cases they have been enrolled when already married. This militates very much against discipline. The married men live out of barracks, and the majority of the non-commissioned officers, being also married, live out of barracks too. I would suggest that at the four centres where the Permanent Force is quartered the Government should take upon themselves the duty of erecting married quarters in close proximity to the barracks. A small rent should be charged for these quarters sufficient to repay the Government proper interest on their outlay, and to provide a small sinking sum for necessary repairs. These quarters should be apportioned to the married non-commissioned officers and men, who should be under the same discipline as the single men living in barracks. In Wellington, where house-rent is so high, this would be a decided boon to the married men of the Force. All the non-commissioned officers and men would always be get-at-able in case their services were required at any time.

The number of married men in the Force is at present :—

No. 1 Company	...	...	...	...	79 out of a total of 218.
No. 2 Company	...	...	...	...	29 " 68.

Artificers.

I have submitted a proposal for increasing the pay and improving the position of the artificers of No. 1 Company, for inclusion in the estimates.

My suggestions as regards the supply of qualified artillery instructors have been carried out. Master-Gunner Richardson's time has been extended for another three years in the colony. Sergeant-Major Burberry is Artillery Instructor for the South Island, and another Artillery Instructor from the Imperial service has just arrived in the colony for Auckland.

The Volunteer Artillery corps will not have any ground for complaint of the want of proper instruction, and I trust these non-commissioned officers will not only raise the standard of usefulness of the Artillery Volunteers, but also materially increase the efficiency of the No. 1 Company of the Permanent Force.

Reserve.

No steps have yet been taken for providing a reserve for the Permanent Force. At present men enlist in the Force for no specified time, and are sworn in to serve in the Defence Force until lawfully discharged. As a matter of fact, a man's discharge is never refused whenever he likes to ask for it. As a rule a man asks for his discharge on the grounds of his wishing to better his position by returning to civil life. The man leaves the Force, and all his military training is lost to the country. I strongly urge that regulations should be laid down as to the length of time a man should serve with the colours and with the reserve.

The men of No. 2 Company who have joined and been taught a trade in the company should not be allowed to leave until they have completed a certain term of engagement, except by purchasing their discharge for a sum varying according to the length of the man's service.

Police Duty.

During the present year very few men have been called upon to perform duties in the streets as policemen, and I trust that unless actually called out in aid of the Civil power, they may never have to perform such duties in future, and that the police and military Forces will be entirely separated.

No men from the Police Force have been trained in the Forts for the past two years, and the police cannot be seriously considered as an efficient military reserve in case of war.

Gymnastic Training.

During the past year a gymnastic instructor has been engaged for training men of the Permanent Force at Wellington. Each recruit on joining has to go through a course of physical training under the instructor, and all trained soldiers have to go through a modified annual course. I propose in future to have some men from the Force specially trained as gymnastic instructors, so that I can arrange for gymnastic courses to be carried out at each station. Before this is done, however, arrangements should be made for the erection of small gymnasiums at each station, and these gymnasiums should be put up in connection with recreation-rooms. It is very desirable to provide attractions for the men, and to make them as comfortable as possible in barracks, so that they shall not have of necessity to go into the towns for their amusements. At places like Wellington and Auckland, where the majority of the men are young soldiers, it is very advisable to encourage them to stay in barracks, and make, if possible, their home-life there.

Service.

In May of this year the Permanent Force was called upon to furnish a party to proceed to Rawene, on account of an anticipated Native disturbance in that locality. Men were sent from both Wellington and Auckland, but happily their services were not required for actual fighting. They performed one trying march, and were on detachment for about a month, during which time their commanding officers inform me that their behaviour was excellent, and the spirit with which they were imbued was in every way commendable.

VOLUNTEERS.

Since my last report a Volunteer establishment has been fixed for the colony, and sanction has been given for capitation to be drawn for 7,000 men. This will enable me, if necessary, to enrol nearly 8,000 men, allowing for the natural percentage of men who, for various reasons, do not capitate yearly.

The establishment for each principal district is now,—

4 mounted corps (1 battalion),	2 battalions infantry (8 companies*),
1 battery field artillery (6 guns),	1 cycle corps,
3 corps naval or garrison artillery,	1 ambulance corps;
1 engineer corps,	

* 3 battalions of 6 companies in the Wellington District.

For the Nelson District,—

1 mounted corps,	1 battalion infantry (8 companies) :
1 field battery (2 guns),	

Giving a total for the colony of,—

17 mounted corps,	10 battalions infantry (75 companies),
5 field batteries (26 guns),	4 cycle corps,
12 corps naval or garrison artillery,	4 ambulance corps.
4 engineer corps,	

The returns, corrected up to the 31st July, show the following establishment :—

14 mounted corps,	7 battalions infantry†,
5 field batteries,	3 cycle corps,
11 corps naval or garrison artillery,	2 ambulance corps.
2 engineer corps,	

† The remaining three battalions are in course of formation.

Of the Infantry, eight companies are in a moribund or inefficient state, and, I hope, will cease to exist by the end of the financial year.

MOUNTED CORPS.

The carbines have been withdrawn from all the mounted corps, and the issue of rifles to them is practically complete. A special bucket has been designed, and is now under supply, to enable the mounted man to carry his rifle on the march without fatigue and without damaging his uniform.

I look upon the mounted corps as a most valuable arm of the service. In this colony, where a comparatively small force has to guard a considerable extent of country, it is most important to have a mobile force of mounted rifles, which can quickly attain any desired position and hold an enemy in check until reinforced.

I much regret that, owing to the men composing these corps being mostly farmers, and working on farms and runs, they cannot be got together oftener for drill and instruction. I have seen all the mounted corps in the colony, and consider that, with proper training, they would form as useful a body of troops as any one would wish to command. The men are intelligent, hardy, used to an outdoor life and to being constantly in the saddle. As a rule they own the horses they ride on parade, which, taken all round, are a useful and handy lot of animals. At present they provide their own horses, saddlery, appointments, and uniforms; receiving from the Government their rifles, rifle-buckets, and accoutrements, and the same amount of capitation as is given to all arms, viz., £2 10s. a year. At Easter camps mounted corps get an allowance of 1s. 6d. a day for feeding their horses; but for their own company camps they get no horse-allowance, and have no extra allowances to those made to an infantry corps, viz., 1s. 6d. a day for six days' training; thus, practically, making a mounted man pay for the keep of his horse while in camp. I was able this last year to get all the corps in the South Island for a week's combined camp at Dunedin in October, and three corps in the Wellington District to camp near Wanganui in March. As there had been no Easter camp in 1897, the increased allowance of 1s. a day for four days, besides an additional

1s. 6d. forage-allowance daily for the eight days of the camp was sanctioned. This worked well, and I am of opinion that if we could always grant such camp-allowance we would get good musters of men, as they would not then be put to any personal expense by going to camp. The capitation should be increased to £3 10s., to allow for the upkeep of saddlery and provision of bridles and head-ropes of a uniform pattern.

The officer commanding the Otago Battalion of Mounted Rifles has put before me an excellent scheme for the training of the mounted corps, which meets with my entire approval. He is of opinion that the mounted corps of the colony are recruited from a class of men to whom the loss of two or three extra days at Easter are of little consideration. He proposes that each corps, instead of going into combined camp for its training, should go into a company camp and receive the individual training to fit it to take its place in a combined camp for the practice of extended manœuvres; the time of training for the Easter camp to be extended to a week for all mounted corps. This would entail but little extra expense to the Government, and would give two weeks' training to the mounted corps instead of one, as at present. Owing to the large area from which a mounted corps is recruited, there will be some difficulty in men earning the 2s. 6d. sanctioned as a personal payment for six afternoon drills, and this they might be enabled partly to earn by staying the extra days in camp.

I have sanctioned a trial of this system being made in the Otago District, as far as the individual camps go, and trust that the Government will see its way to approve of the extended training at Easter. If successful as regards the Otago District this year, the system should be applied throughout the colony next year.

FIELD ARTILLERY.

There are now five batteries of field artillery in the colony—one at each of the four centres and one of two guns at Nelson for protection of the Cable Station.

The batteries at Napier and Invercargill have been turned into rifle companies, and we have now two batteries of six 9-pr. R.B.L. guns each, respectively at Dunedin and Christchurch, one of four 6-pr. Nordenfeldts (to be increased to six guns) at Wellington, and one of five 9-pr. R.B.L. guns at Auckland; also one of two 6-pr. Nordenfeldt guns at Nelson, to be increased eventually to four guns. A complete battery of 15-pr. B.L. guns, with wagons and harness, has been ordered from England; and, under present arrangements, one is to be ordered annually until the four ports are each provided with a modern field battery.

The provision of these batteries will necessarily very much modify the condition of training of the Field Artillery. At present the batteries only turn out horsed to fire a salute on the Queen's Birthday and occasionally for special ceremonial parades and field days, and to march to and from camps and practice. Only one pair of horses is allowed per gun, and consequently the guns cannot go out of a walk, and cannot practise taking up positions such as they would be called upon to occupy in action on ground commanding the surrounding country. Should they by any means succeed in getting into such a position, they could not be withdrawn in time to avoid capture if at all pressed by the enemy. The new field batteries will be practically white elephants and useless unless they are properly manned and horsed. Men and horses should be trained to impart sufficient mobility to the guns to enable them to play their proper part in the defence.

The Volunteer regulations are being altered to allow of the field batteries going into camp for a fortnight instead of six days, and during this time they should take six horses per gun into camp, and be exercised in manœuvring as well as in gun drill and fire discipline. The officers, staff-sergeants and Nos. 1 of detachments should all be mounted every time the battery turns out for manœuvre.

As the four modern batteries will be allocated to the principal ports and manned by Volunteers who do not own horses, contracts should be entered into with firms owning a good stamp of horse for the supply of the required number of horses when called upon. The firms should undertake as far as possible always to supply the same horses and drivers. The drivers to be enrolled as Volunteers, and earn their capitation by attending all the mounted parades.

In addition to the fortnight camps, the batteries should turn out once a month for mounted parades of an afternoon. These parades should carry a personal payment of 2s. 6d. a head to the men turning out, and should not be earned unless a sufficient number of men turn out to enable the battery to be efficiently worked.

The rifles have now been withdrawn from all the batteries, and a proper proportion of carbines issued in their place. The musketry course will be altered and modified so that the men will not earn their capitation on the strength of their skill with the rifle, but on their efficiency as Field Artillerymen.

NAVAL AND GARRISON ARTILLERY.

This branch of the service is divided into two separate divisions: the Artillery Branch told off to assist in working the guns in the forts, and the Submarine Mining Branch to assist in laying the mine-fields, &c. It is quite a misnomer to call a corps having nothing to do with artillery work an artillery corps, and the corps employed exclusively on submarine-mining work should be styled "Submarine-mining Corps." The Defence Act should be altered in this respect, as in its present form it does not permit of men being enrolled except for artillery work.

The officers and men of the Artillery Corps are keen Volunteers, and anxious and willing to learn their work, but they suffer from the fact that the majority of the forts are situated at some distance from the towns, and can only be got at by water. This prevents them in the majority of cases drilling at the forts in the positions they would have to occupy in action, except during the time of their annual camp.

All drill, except in very special cases, is carried out of an evening, but now that daylight parades have been sanctioned, I hope that all the daylight drills will be carried out in the forts. To

enable this to be done, however, some arrangement will have to be made either for hiring or providing suitable steamers for carrying the men to and from the forts. It is impossible to train men as gun-layers—one of the most important of artillery duties—unless the training can be carried out by daylight.

There are now two corps in the colony, one at Auckland and one at Wellington, whose duties are entirely confined to submarine-mining work; but, owing to the want of proper submarine-mining vessels their instruction cannot be thoroughly carried out. In my last year's report I strongly recommended that two efficient submarine-mining boats should be procured, and it is imperative for the efficient training of the men and the proper laying-out of the mine-fields, that such boats should be purchased at as early a date as possible.

A portion of the Petone Naval Artillery Volunteers are supposed to be trained as submarine miners; but as we have no reliable seaworthy vessel which can take the men over from Petone to Shelly Bay in rough weather, or in a short space of time, the men have never had any thorough training as miners. I propose, therefore, after this year to confine the work of the Petone Navals to purely artillery work, and employ this corps in the artillery defence works of the inner harbour at Wellington. The submarine-mining work for Wellington will be done by the newly-formed corps from the Star Boating Club.

The regulations as to the musketry course for all naval corps are being revised, and these corps will earn their capitulation on their qualification as artillerymen and submarine miners, and not be dependent for it on their skill with the rifle.

I recommend that the money hitherto given for prizes for rifle-shooting to the various artillery corps should be lumped together and given as a prize to the company who scores most points in a competitive artillery practice, which should be instituted yearly in the four centres.

More ammunition should be allowed annually to the artillery corps for their practice, as it is only by carrying out the actual firing that the practical results of the training can be ascertained.

During the past year the naval corps at the Bluff, the Thames, and Nelson have been turned into infantry companies, and the corps at Napier, Wanganui, and Greymouth have been disbanded, so that now we only have naval corps at the four centres; and the fallacious system of having artillery corps at out-stations, at which there were no guns to work or no means of training the men in artillery duties, has disappeared, never, I hope, to be revived.

INFANTRY.

During the past year the organisation of the infantry has been changed, and all the corps in the colony either have been or are about to be organised into battalions.

This is a simple matter in the centres, where there are several corps in the one town, and others grouped on the railway system in close proximity to the towns, and the battalions so formed will have a reality of existence. As regards the country corps, however, there are rarely more than two companies of the battalion in one town, and the other companies are dotted about at different stations along the line of rail, so that the battalion only comes together as a whole at Easter camps or on special occasions.

To carry out the battalion system thoroughly in the country districts an extended use will have to be made of the railways, and I must urge that this should be done, so that battalions if possible, and most certainly half-battalions, should be brought together for daylight drills. The railways belong to Government, and the money spent by the Defence Department in this way would go to the Railway Department—a simple transfer from one pocket to the other, without any real appreciable cost to the State. At the present a considerable portion of the money voted for defence is paid in hard cash to the Railway Department.

Every opportunity should be taken for getting corps to work together in battalions. This will give the corps mutual confidence in each other, supply the stimulus of emulation, accustom them to their battalion officers, and give those officers the practice in command and drill which will enable them to use their battalions to the best advantage in the field.

Under this system the company remains intact as regards its financial position and interior economy, but becomes part of the battalion for the purposes of drill and discipline. If this system is only properly and judiciously carried out I am sure that the advantage over the old system under which companies were isolated and had no interests or sympathies in common will be very soon apparent.

The infantry corps are, considering the amount of training they get, fairly efficient in drill-hall work, but sadly deficient in their knowledge of practical soldiering. This is not the fault of the men, but of the system of Volunteering in force in the colony.

With the exception of the time spent in company camp no daylight parades are insisted on, and consequently the men get very little out-of-door training. In some districts advantage is taken of moonlight nights to take the companies out, but this is not nearly sufficient, and I trust that the six daylight parades, with a personal payment to the men of 2s. 6d. each parade, recently sanctioned, will go some way to remedy this defect. Of course these parades, and the conditions they are to be held under this year, are only experimental, and till we have gained some experience of how the men turn out, and what effect the training has on the Force, no hard-and-fast rules can be laid down.

The present regulations say that, to earn the 2s. 6d. personal payment, three-quarters of the strength of each corps must be present on parade, and that in stations where more than one infantry company exists all the companies are to turn out at the same time. I am informed in some places that three-quarters is too high an average to fix; in others, that there will be no difficulty in getting the required number. It all seemingly depends on the constitution of the various corps, and as to whether they are composed of men who have their weekly half-holiday on the same day. My idea in instituting these parades was, in addition to giving the Force some field-training, to impart a

reality to such training by getting together a sufficient number of men to let the drills be done thoroughly. Men will understand the drill better, enter into it more zealously, and see the necessity of working together, taking advantage of cover, &c., much more readily, when there are sufficient numbers present, rather than when one man has to represent a section, and the work has to be done by a skeleton Force.

If I found that a company was taking the matter up seriously, and was doing its best to improve and become efficient, I would have no hesitation in recommending that either the whole half-crown, or a portion of it, be paid to the men, although the company had not turned out quite up to the strength required by the regulations.

I trust, now that the Government has seen its way to provide the money for these extra parades, that the employers of labour in the colony will co-operate and do all they can, compatibly with their business arrangements, to allow their men to take advantage of the parades. Their success depends very largely on employers granting Volunteers in their employ some slight concessions, and, as the Volunteers work entirely for the protection of the employer's property in time of war, I trust that we will be met in a liberal spirit. I am glad to say that within the last four months two large firms, one in Auckland and one in Dunedin, have come forward and allowed corps to be formed exclusively from their employes, and, as the men in these companies will all be able to get away on the same day, I have no doubt but that the companies so formed will soon turn out smart and efficient.

Should these daylight parades prove a success this year, I hope that the full number I asked for (twelve) will be granted next year. I am sure that the money given to improve the efficiency of the force in field training and outdoor work will be money well expended.

The great weakness of the Volunteer Force lies in its officers and non-commissioned officers. So long as the power of election of officers remains with the men, so long will the Volunteers be inefficient from a military point of view. As matters at present exist, an officer is dependent for his position on the will of the men, and he is loth to do anything at all contrary to the feelings of the men; the consequence being a very slack state of affairs and a sad want of discipline, which would militate very seriously against efficiency should active operations have to be taken. The officers are, as a rule, keen to learn, but have few opportunities of perfecting themselves in the higher branches of the military profession. It is the non-commissioned officers, however, who are the great blot on the Volunteer Force. In the large majority of the companies I have inspected, I have had serious fault to find with the non-commissioned officers. Making large allowances for nervousness and what is called "inspection fever," I rarely find that beyond knowing the manual and firing exercises, and in some cases the bayonet exercise and physical drills, the non-commissioned officers are able to efficiently instruct their men. The drills and exercises I have enumerated are the least practical parts of a Volunteer's work, and in many districts of the colony prize competitions are held in them; and it is for this reason, I presume, that the non-commissioned officers take so much interest in them. I should be extremely glad if, as a body, they would take as much interest in the practical and useful part of their work. The non-commissioned officers should be the backbone of the company, thoroughly up in all drills and capable of imparting instruction both to the recruit and the company; they should not permit mistakes to pass without notice when drilling their men. As a rule, they seem to be either afraid to correct the men or to be too ignorant to do so; they do not inspire the respect among the men which they ought to, and as a body are capable of vast improvement.

I have lately issued orders that in all the centres classes of instruction are to be held for both officers and non-commissioned officers, and all the junior officers and non-commissioned officers are to be given frequent opportunities of drilling their companies, and when an instructor is not present that the non-commissioned officers, for a portion of the time at drill, are to drill their own sections under the supervision of the officers.

During the last few months there has been a great revival of Volunteering throughout the colony. Since my arrival seventy-one corps have proffered their services to the Government, and the majority of these offers have come in since the commencement of this year.

I have only recommended the acceptance of the services of companies at head-quarters of districts or in stations closely connected by rail or boat with those in which corps already exist, so that no difficulty should be experienced in getting companies together for daylight drills, and that mobilisation for service could be carried out in the most expeditious manner. Each of the four centres now has its own town battalion; the companies comprising the battalion can be mobilised in a few hours, and marched at once to their positions under the defence scheme. The companies of the country battalions, being all on the line of rail or boat communication, could all be mobilised and in their position within twenty-four hours.

ENGINEER COMPANIES.

Provision has been made for an Engineer Corps to be formed in each of the four principal districts. Corps have existed for some time past in Christchurch and Dunedin. So far I have been unable to form them in Auckland and Wellington. A scale of equipment has been laid down for such corps, and orders are being sent Home for part of the equipment this year, to be completed in the following year. These corps will be available for telephone, signalling, and telegraph work, and for carrying out simple field engineering, and I hope the establishment of the four corps will soon be completed.

CYCLE CORPS.

Sanction has been given to the formation of a Cycle Corps, consisting of two officers and twenty-five non-commissioned officers and men, at each of the four centres. Corps already exist at Wellington, Dunedin, and Christchurch, and I hope soon to get the offer of a corps from Auckland.

AMBULANCE CORPS.

The formation of an Ambulance Corps, consisting of two officers and twenty-five non-commissioned officers and men, at each of the four centres, has been approved. Corps now exist in Auckland and Dunedin, and the other two centres I hope will soon follow.

MEDICAL SERVICES.

Regulations are being drawn up for the reorganisation of the medical branch. This branch will be organised by districts, a Principal Medical Officer being appointed for each district, who will be responsible for the proper carrying-out of all the medical services in the district. All the districts will be put under a principal medical officer at head-quarters. An equipment has been drawn up of the medical stores necessary for the Ambulance Companies and the Field Hospitals, and orders have been sent to England for the necessary stores and appliances. As regards hospital accommodation at the four centres, no doubt if there was any protracted fighting the large hospitals would give us all the assistance in their power in providing accommodation and treatment for serious cases. Slightly wounded men would be accommodated in buildings already selected by the Defence Committee, and remain under the treatment of the military medical officers.

CADET COMPANIES.

I understand that the Education Department is considering the desirability of systematic military training throughout the colony for the boys being educated in the State schools. That the Military Department should be relieved of this duty and not charged with the expense of the boys so trained is, I think, a sound move. The Defence Department gets very little benefit from the boys trained in the companies of the State schools. Many of them drift out into the country, where there are no Volunteer corps, and as far as I can ascertain but few of them join the Volunteer Force as adults. Under the circumstances, I do not think that the Military Department should be saddled with the expense of the up-keep of the cadet corps. I am sure, however, that a military training, widely diffused among the growing youth of the colony, is good both from a moral and physical point of view, and this exercise and training must be very beneficial to the boy's physique.

TRANSPORT AND COMMISSARIAT.

In the defence scheme instructions have been drawn up as to the number of horses, carts, and vehicles of all descriptions that will be required for the carriage of tents, rations, ammunition, &c., in time of war. Also, a scale of rations has been laid down for both men and horses. Arrangements will have to be made for the speedy supply of these requisites on the outbreak of war. In time of peace and during manœuvres pack-horses for the carriage of the reserve ammunition should accompany the battalions and companies, so that practice might be got of the supply of ammunition in the field.

BANDS.

The Volunteer regulations allow of corps outside the centres enlisting five men supernumerary to the company as bandsmen, and these bandsmen receive capitation provided the corps complies with the regulations in earning capitation. This regulation works well in places where two or more corps are in existence, but should be cancelled for places in which there is only one corps. As it is impossible to form a band with five men it is only in very few single-corps stations that this regulation has been taken advantage of.

I would recommend that at stations where only single corps exist no bandsmen should be allowed, but that at each of the head-quarters of the country battalions a battalion band should be allowed, to consist of twenty men, who should be on the same footing as regards capitation as the garrison bands at the centres, except that they should not draw the annual allowance of £25. The bands at Oamaru and Invercargill to remain as they are at present.

RIFLE CLUBS.

There are at present in existence thirteen rifle clubs recognised by the Government, having in their possession a number of Government Snider rifles. These clubs, I understand, were formed in places where Volunteer corps had been disbanded, and the men were permitted to retain the use of their rifles and received a grant of a hundred rounds of ammunition yearly as a compensation for the disbandment of their corps. This free issue of ammunition has been discontinued since February, 1895, presumably in accordance with Recommendation No. 24 of the Volunteer Conference of 1894.

There are also seventy-five private rifle clubs in the colony which get no grant of any kind from the Government beyond being allowed to purchase ammunition at the Government rate. The members of the rifle clubs perform no duties for the State, are not under any kind of military control, and simply take up rifle-shooting for a pastime and for their own amusement. They are assisted by the Government in so far that the members obtain free railway-passes when attending the annual meeting of the New Zealand Rifle Association.

Some discussion has taken place, both in Parliament and in the public Press, as to the value of these rifle clubs, and the desirability of incorporating them into the Forces and including them in the Defence Force of the colony. It has been urged that the best shots in the colony are to be found amongst the men in the rifle clubs; and the example of the good shooting made by the Boers in the Transvaal war has been brought forward in favour of their being recognised by the Government as part of the fighting branch.

I must point out that the Boers practised their shooting under entirely different conditions to that carried out by the rifle clubs in the colony. They were dependent in many cases for fresh meat

on their skill with the rifle, and the story of the Boer father handing his son three cartridges and promising him a thrashing if he did not bring in three buck has more than the element of fiction in it. The Boer practised at moving and living objects continually, and now that the Transvaal is more settled and the game has been driven further into the interior, his skill as a marksman has very much deteriorated.

The rifle-club man practises simply at a standing target, under conditions as favourable as he can make them to himself. He has no experience of field-firing under Service conditions, no sense of discipline, and knows nothing about drill. I have no hesitation in saying that rifle clubs formed in towns where Volunteer companies exist, do harm to the companies and take recruits away from the ranks. The only way in which I think they should receive encouragement from Government is in turning them into Reserve Corps for the Volunteer Force.

After serving for four years in the Volunteers a man should be qualified to join a Government Rifle Club, formed in a station where a Volunteer Corps exists. He should be allowed fifty rounds of ammunition annually, provided he turns out once a quarter for drill and inspection. The whole club should turn out together for this quarterly drill, if possible, men not able to attend being allowed to put in a drill with the Volunteer company. In places where Volunteer corps do not exist rifle clubs might be formed consisting of old Volunteers, who would receive the same grant of ammunition, provided they put in their four quarterly drills in the year; rifle clubs so formed to be brought under the conditions of the Defence Act as part of the Defence Force of the colony.

A large number of men leave the Volunteer Force every year, and I am of opinion that if rifle clubs were put on the footing I now recommend, we would retain a fair proportion of the trained men as a Volunteer Reserve.

Unless a rifle club devotes a certain time to military training as well as perfecting its members in shooting, it will be useless to the Defence Force, and a lot of untrained and undisciplined men being included in the Force at the outbreak of hostilities would be a source of anxiety and hamper the utility of the Force. If a man gives no service to the State I fail to see why he should expect to be subsidised by the State for the purpose of carrying out his own pleasure and amusement.

NEW ZEALAND RIFLE ASSOCIATION.

I attended this year the meeting of the New Zealand Rifle Association, at Oamaru. The Government granted this association 50,000 rounds of ammunition and free railway-passes to all members of the association. They further helped the association by allowing men from the Permanent Force from Dunedin and Christchurch to act as markers at a payment of 2s. 6d. per head per diem, and provided and paid carriage on a large number of tents to the scene of the meeting. The numbers attending the meeting from other parts of the colony were: of Volunteers, 144; rifle club men, 52; lady members of rifle clubs, 7; total, 203. These numbers were further increased by the men from the two rifle companies at Oamaru. Amongst the Volunteers, eighteen officers attended, thus making an attendance of 126 rank and file, out of a total of about 4,500. To make the meeting more of a practical nature, and to encourage Volunteers to practice firing under service conditions, the Government gave substantial prizes for the Lloyd Lindsay competition for the mounted troops, and a field-firing competition for the dismounted troops. It was hoped that teams from the different districts in the colony would compete, but unfortunately only four teams came forward for each of these competitions, and these practically were local teams.

Complaints had been received that in many matches the Volunteers had to come into competition with rifle-club men, who were armed with superior weapons purchased at their own expense, and this gave an unfair advantage to the rifle-club men. On account of this representation, matches were arranged to be fired with weapons issued solely by the Government; and also a match was put in to encourage the young shooters in the Volunteer Force who had never won a prize before. From a defence-point of view, the results of the meeting were disappointing; and I cannot recommend that in future any assistance be given to the New Zealand Rifle Association. The money, I consider, would be much better spent for the benefit of the volunteer fighting force, if a certain amount was allotted to each district for prize-firing during the year. Each district should have its own rifle-meeting, the majority of the competitions being confined to Volunteers, and good practical matches forming a great part of the programme. One or two matches might be set apart exclusively for rifle-club men. Free railway-passes should be granted to the men in the district taking part in these competitions, which should be entirely under the management of the officer commanding the district.

One district should be selected annually which should form a competing centre for the colony. That is to say, that in this district certain matches would be fired, open to the whole Volunteer Force; and a small extra grant should be given annually to this one district. The men taking part in the several rifle meetings should live in camp and be under military discipline. At the last year's Oamaru meeting, although a large number of tents were provided by the Government, no one but the permanent-force markers lived in the camp, and the tents were only utilised as shelter for the competitors in case of rain. Many more tents were provided than was necessary for this purpose. Towards the end of the meeting bad weather came on and several tents were damaged, the cost of this having to be met by the Defence Department.

CAMPS.

During the past year I have encouraged the Volunteers to go into camp in as large numbers as possible. The mounted corps in the South Island, and those in the Wellington District, went into combined camps—the former at Dunedin, and the latter at Wanganui. At places where there are more than one infantry corps, I tried to get all the corps to go into their annual camp at the same time, and I hope to carry out this system more thoroughly this year. In each district in the colony the camps were held at Easter. The men left their homes on Thursday night, arrived on Friday,

in some cases had to leave again so as to be in time for their work on Monday morning, and by Monday evening all the camps were broken up. This practically only gives two days for work, and it is for serious consideration whether these two days' drill are worth the expense entailed—£3,000. I found, with the Wellington camp, that the men were just beginning to settle down, and to find some reality in their training; by the time they had to go away. If I could have kept them another four or five days, I am sure every corps would have greatly benefited by the extended training. The difference between Home and Colonial volunteering is, I know, very great; but in England, where men are worse paid, have fewer holidays, and much less leisure than they have in the colony, a large number of the Volunteer Corps manage to go out for a whole week's training to some place quite apart from their stations. I should very much like, next year, to attempt to get a portion or the whole of the Volunteers out at Easter, or any convenient season, for a whole week's training. The great difficulty, of course, lies in the unwillingness or inability of the employers of labour to give the men in their employ any special facilities for attending camps at a distance from their own homes.

It is essential that at some time the troops in each district should be drilled in the parts they will be called upon to fill in the defence scheme, and to occupy the positions they will be called upon to take up on active service. The more practice they get, the more available will they become in case of actual war. The positions around the coasts are so extended, that with only two available days it would be impossible for the troops to be drilled in all the likely schemes. No doubt, for the extra three or four days in camp the Government would have to give some extra remuneration, but, as I have already stated, any expenditure on field training is money spent in the right direction.

UNIFORMS.

The position of the uniform question in the colony is in a most unsatisfactory and unsoldier-like condition. In my last report I recommended that the corps in the Auckland District and the Mounted Corps of the colony who required a new uniform should adopt the kharkee uniform, the remainder of the troops being dressed as laid down by the Volunteer Conference of 1894. This would not have interfered with the clothing of the majority of the troops in the same style, and would have given the Mounted Corps and the Auckland District a distinctly serviceable fighting dress. My recommendations were not accepted, and the order was given that all corps without exception in the colony were to be allowed to dress as they pleased. This order is a severe blow to discipline and proper organisation, and has not tended in any way to increase the efficiency of the service. It was brought about, I understand, by the discontent of one or two corps, or rather perhaps by a few members of these corps, and is deprecated by all Volunteers having the interests of the service at heart. The majority of the Volunteer corps in both the Wellington District and South Island had provided themselves with uniforms in accordance with the recommendations of the Volunteer Conference of 1894, and these corps now feel it a grievance that they should have been put to the expense of having to provide themselves with this uniform, when, if they had waited a short time, they might have pleased themselves as their mode of dress. I further urged that, whilst permitting the choice of uniforms to battalions, it should be insisted upon that all the companies in the battalion should be dressed alike. This was not agreed to, and now we have the absurd sight of a battalion in which may be mixed several kinds of uniform, including naval uniforms. The only good I can see in this is to deceive an enemy, by showing him a large variety of uniforms, into thinking that he has a considerable force opposed to him. It is against all soldierly customs and traditions, and militates greatly against giving reality to the battalion system.

The Conference of 1894 decided that belts and accoutrements should be of brown leather, and no alteration, as far as I know, has been made in this decision, but unfortunately there are no brown belts in store, nor, as far as I know, have any been ordered. We have a large stock of white buff belts in store, and I am trying to see if we can get these dyed a suitable brown colour. If the experiments are successful, then all the buff belts throughout the colony should be dyed a uniform colour. This also applies to pouches, frogs, and slings. Many of the companies have old black belts, old brown belts, with mixtures of different classes of buckles. A sufficient supply of serviceable belts should be ordered to equip all companies alike.

A dress should be laid down for the staff officers of battalions, but with the multiplicity of uniforms existing in a battalion it would be rather hard to combine part of each uniform into the staff officers' dress. Perhaps it might be considered advisable to allow these officers to dress as they please. Practically now there are no dress regulations at all.

My recommendation that an allowance should be made to corps for the supply of great-coats has not been entertained, and I can only point out that without great-coats a corps is not fit to take the field.

The Government have decided to make a free issue of water-bottles and haversacks, and this will be carried out on receipt of the stores from England.

To obtain some uniformity in the matter of dress, I would suggest that it is advisable the Government should take the clothing of the troops into its hands. The capitation allowance at present is £2 10s. per head annually, out of which amount a corps is supposed to put aside £1 5s. for the purchase and up-keep of uniforms.

I recommend that in future the capitation allowance be reduced to £1 5s., the Government undertaking to supply all corps with uniforms of a service pattern, the uniforms to be renewed every three years, and at the expiration of that time to become the property of the corps. This would do away with the hardship now experienced by new corps on formation having either to borrow money or get credit from the tailor for the supply of uniforms.

ORGANIZATION OF MILITARY DISTRICTS.

The districts are now organized as follows:—Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury, Otago, and Nelson. During the past year the sub-districts of North Otago and Southland have been incorporated into the Otago District. The Sub-Commanders at Oamaru and Invercargill having been retained were placed under the direct command of the officer commanding the Otago District, and to each of these sub-commands has been allotted a half-battalion of the country battalion of infantry.

At present the officer commanding each district has, with the exception of the Auckland and Nelson Districts, no paid officer to help him in carrying out the work of administration of his district. Commanding Officers are frequently absent on duty in various parts of their command, and the large amount of clerical work at their head-quarters has to stand over till their return. This is an unsound principle causing great delay, and, in many cases, considerable inconvenience. Each District Commanding Officer should have an Adjutant to assist him in carrying out the duties of his district, so that when he was away from head-quarters routine work would not suffer, and he could send this officer away as often as he considered necessary to carry out inspections and instruction among the country corps. I have recommended that such an officer as Adjutant should be appointed to each district, and that the three officers required for Wellington, Canterbury, and Otago should be obtained from the Imperial service. These officers should have Hythe certificates of musketry, and have been through the mounted-infantry course at Aldershot.

The Auckland District already possesses an Adjutant, but when his term of service expires he should be replaced by an officer from the Imperial service. The Nelson District having only a few corps in it could remain as at present. In addition to the Adjutant each battalion in the district should have a paid Sergeant-Instructor, and each officer commanding a district should have a paid Sergeant-Instructor on his staff. To necessitate this plan being carried out, and to replace men at present doing Instructors' work who are either incompetent or past their work, it will be necessary to obtain eight Instructors from the Imperial service. These men would cost but little more than men engaged locally. They should be young men, unmarried, smart, and thoroughly up in the latest drills; and I cannot too strongly urge that steps should be taken to procure such men at the very earliest date. The Volunteer Force throughout the colony suffers for want of proper instruction. In the Auckland District, for instance, where there are sixteen companies of infantry, we have only one Instructor. I have been approached in that district, on more than one occasion, as to whether the different corps might not combine together to hire an Instructor, so necessary do they feel it to be for their well-being that they should receive proper instruction, but I hold that it is the duty of the Government to supply this instruction; at the same time I admire the zeal of the Volunteers in their desire to make themselves efficient.

Work is too much centralised in the Defence Office at Wellington. Officers commanding districts are not allowed anything like as free a hand as they should be. For the very slightest expenditure, or for the issue of a single railway-pass, they have to apply for official sanction to headquarters. Commanding Officers should be allowed a certain discretion in the issue of railway-passes in their districts, and a small sum—say, £25 annually—should be allowed them for contingent and urgent expenses. They should furnish an account of this sum, and also of the number of railway-passes issued quarterly, to the Defence Office. If Commanding Officers are not to be trusted to act honestly and with discretion in small matters of this sort, they are not fit for their positions, and should not be appointed.

The pay of the Commanding Officers is inadequate for the position they occupy and the responsibility that rests on them. They only draw the same rate of house-allowance as a Sergeant-Instructor.

SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION.

In my last report I strongly advised that a School of Instruction should be formed at Wellington for the Volunteer Force, but no money has been taken up in the estimates to carry out this service. I find among the Volunteers a general desire to benefit by any instruction that can be provided for them, and I have been asked several times lately, in different parts of the country, if it would not be possible to form a school on the lines I have already indicated. I have no doubt, if such a school were formed, that very many officers and non-commissioned officers of the Force would only be too willing to attend, provided they got slight assistance from the Government. I would suggest that the travelling-expenses of any Volunteers wishing to attend these schools should be paid by the Government; that non-commissioned officers and men should be given accommodation in barracks and free rations whilst so attending; officers to be given free passages, and the recognised travelling-allowance for their rank whilst actually under instruction; four courses, of three weeks' or a month's duration, might be held during the year: these courses would be thoroughly practical, in addition to lectures on the higher branches of the soldier's profession. Everybody passing through the school would be granted a certificate of proficiency. I am convinced that such an institution would be of the greatest benefit to the Force. At present there are no means of imparting instruction in anything but drill-hall work; and if we are to keep up the newly-authorised establishment we must lay ourselves out to interest the men in their work, and instruct a few thoroughly, who in their turn should be able, on return to their corps, to impart efficient instruction.

GYMNASIUMS AND ARMOURIES.

I have recommended that in the four centres a certain sum should be taken up in the estimates for the provision of gymnasiums and armouries. Physical and gymnastic instruction is a most important feature in military training. It improves the physique of the men in every way, hardens their muscles, and enables them to bear fatigue. It must be remembered that the Volunteer movement in the large towns has to compete with the various amusements of cricket, football, cycling, &c.; and the more we can make the Volunteer service attractive, the more likely are we to get recruits, and those of a good stamp. In each of the centres I hope there will be, before long, regular Volunteer gymnastic, football, cycling clubs, &c., and that the Volunteers will take a prominent and successful part in athletics of all descriptions.

As regards the necessity for armouries, I would urge that it would be economy on the part of the Government to provide suitable buildings as adjuncts of the drill-halls. The Forces are about to be rearmed with the new rifle, which requires, perhaps, more care than the old Martini rifle; and the provision of armouries, where a man could be told-off to take charge of the arms and keep them clean, would insure the certainty of their always being in a fit and proper state for immediate use when required. Any damage or neglect of the arms by a Volunteer would be at once discovered and traced to the person causing such damage. In some few of the country stations the

companies have arm-racks in the drill-halls, in which the arms are stored when not in use. This arrangement has been found to work very well, and should be carried out universally throughout the colony.

ARMS.

The first instalment of the new rifles has arrived in the colony, and the second is on the way. I much regret that it was not decided when new rifles were procured, as recommended in my last report, to purchase the magazine arm. No doubt the '303" Martini-Enfield is very much in advance of the '45" Martini as regards range and shooting; but any force we will have to contend with will, in all probability, be armed with the most up-to-date weapons.

I also regret that the triangular bayonet should have been supplied. It is not suitable for this colony, and the short sword-bayonet as sent out with the carbines would have been much more useful.

Shortly we will have three different rifles in the hands of the Infantry Volunteers, the '303" Martini-Enfield, the '45" Martini-Henry, and the Snider. I sincerely hope that we may soon get a supply of the '303" rifle sufficient to end this state of affairs, and that by the end of next year there will be only one class of rifle in the hands of the troops.

AMMUNITION.

Small-arm Ammunition.

A great many complaints have been made as to the quality of the ammunition supplied to the troops in the past. So bad was the 1896 supply that I had to recommend the discontinuance of the issue, and to withdraw all that had been issued to the troops, and replace it with the supply made in 1897. Very few complaints have been made of the 1897 manufacture.

At the 1898 meeting of the New Zealand Rifle Association, held at Oamaru, arrangements were made for a supply of 1897 ammunition, and this ammunition being found faulty and objected to, a consignment of ammunition manufactured in Victoria, which had previously been well reported on for its shooting qualities, was sent down. On the first day of the shooting the locally-made 1897 ammunition was issued. This was objected to on the score of bad shooting, and on the second day the Victorian ammunition was issued. There was found to be practically no difference in the shooting of the two classes of ammunition, and for the remainder of the meeting the men were allowed to shoot indiscriminately with either Colonial ammunition or Victorian ammunition. This seemed to give general satisfaction.

Since my last report two sets of velocity instruments have been received from England, and a proper building is now being put up for their installation. Last month a non-commissioned officer, specially trained in the work of testing ammunition, arrived from England. His duties will be to carry out the tests of the ammunition as far as possible in accordance with the specifications in force in the Imperial service. This cannot be done thoroughly, however, until the velocity instruments are properly set up, and all arrangements are made for testing.

The supply of the '303 rifle will necessitate an entirely different system of manufacture on the part of the Colonial Ammunition Company. Cordite is substituted for powder in the ammunition, and the process of filling the cartridges is a matter requiring great care and some experience. As a precautionary measure, and so that the troops should have cordite ammunition available on the issue of the new rifles, the company was given an order for 1,020,000 rounds of '303 ammunition, which they have been allowed to supply partly from their Australian manufactures, but the majority was ordered by them in a complete state from England. I trust that this ammunition will entirely satisfy the conditions of the specifications, and that the Volunteers in future will not have to complain of any issue of bad ammunition. The ammunition supply for the colony is a matter of vital importance, and no efforts should be spared in the direction of supplying ammunition of a good and reliable quality. For some time to come, and until all the troops are supplied with the Martini-Enfield rifle, we may require a supply annually of Martini ammunition, as well as the '303 ammunition. A supply of cordite has been ordered from England by the Government, and I sincerely hope that by the time it arrives in the colony the Colonial Ammunition Company will be in a position to undertake locally the manufacture of the '303 cartridges.

RIFLE-RANGES.

The question of improving the security of rifle-ranges for the '303 rifle is an important one, and must be taken in hand at once. Many of the ranges in the colony are neither suitable nor safe for this weapon, and on the majority of them alterations will have to be made. These alterations will principally consist in lengthening the range and providing extra security for the markers and the public.

DRILL-HALLS.

The question of the ownership and up-keep of drill-halls requires consideration. Some halls belong exclusively to the Government, some exclusively to corps, and others partly owned by Government and partly by the Volunteers. All halls should, as far as possible, be on the same footing, more especially as regards repairs. A certain sum should be allocated yearly for repair of each drill-hall, *pro rata* either to the value of the hall or the number of Volunteers using it; and this amount should be definitely fixed by regulation.

MEDALS.

The issue of New Zealand war-medals and decorations should be stopped. During the past thirty years all the old soldiers who have earned the rewards should have had their claims satisfied.

One of the conditions for the bestowing of the New Zealand Cross is that a man should have been recommended for it by his Commanding Officer at the time the act of bravery was performed. This decoration represents to the Colonial Forces what the Victoria Cross does to the Imperial troops—the highest possible military decoration; and every care should be taken to safeguard the bestowal of such a high military honour.

At present, in some cases, Volunteer officers are earning the Imperial Volunteer officers' decoration under entirely different conditions to those in force for Imperial Volunteer officers. In this colony we have an Officers' Unattached Active List, composed of officers who have served in the Volunteers, and who are supposed to be available for service as District Staff Officers. Many of these officers have not performed any military service for years; but, provided they are certified as efficient and capable by their Commanding Officer, and have the requisite service of twenty years, passed partly in the Volunteer Force and partly on the Unattached Active List, they are eligible for the decoration. Some of the officers on the list take much interest in volunteering, and are, as they are intended to be, actually District Staff Officers, and give much assistance to the District Commanding Officers. Others never attend parade, and take no interest in volunteering; and it is this class of officer who has a grievance, because when he applies for the decoration it is refused, on the grounds that his Commanding Officer is unable to recommend him as an efficient and capable officer. I consider that this decoration should only be issued in future to officers who have either completed their twenty years' service in a corps, or twenty years' combined service in a corps and actively employed as a District Staff Officer.

The wearing when on parade or military duty of decorations granted by the Government for rifle-shooting should be stopped. It is contrary to all soldierly custom, and tends to lower the value of military medals and decorations and the Humane Society's life-saving medal.

Now that the issue of the Imperial Volunteer Long-service Medal has been extended to the New Zealand Volunteer Force, the bestowal of the New Zealand Long-service Medal should be discontinued.

THE NELSON DISTRICT.

The Nelson District is now over its strength in infantry corps, and some of these corps are located in places where it is difficult to recruit and to keep up to proper strength. The district is so scattered that it is most difficult to supervise from Nelson, and neither the Commanding Officer nor the Adjutant, however willing they may be, can spare the time to visit the West Coast more than occasionally.

There are now five corps on the West Coast, and these should be reduced at the end of the present financial year, by disbanding the corps at Hokitika, Ross, and Kumara, the Force at Westport to be increased, if possible, by the raising of another company at that port. This will bring the infantry strength of the district to eight companies; and this is quite the full strength the district should be maintained at.

The field-battery at Nelson will be increased by two guns as soon as guns are available.

DEFENCE DEPARTMENT.

The organization of the Defence Department at head-quarters requires to be put on a different footing. The duties of the Commander of the Forces and the Under-Secretary of Defence require to be clearly defined and their individual responsibility fixed. All orders and instructions to the Forces should be issued by the Commander of the Forces, who is the responsible military adviser of the Minister for Defence.

As at present constituted, there is no military organization in the head-quarters office. The clerks are mostly men from the Permanent Force, but are wholly under control of civilians, and no one, so far as I am aware, is told off to do purely military work. The office should be divided into military and civil branches, with a definite share of work and duty for each branch. The work should be organized into sections for discipline, military organization, training, &c., supply and finance; and regulations should be drawn up for each section. The Commander of the Forces should be consulted on all points connected with the administration, and no action should be taken with reference to any matters connected with the Forces without his being previously informed.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, I must point out that, though much remains to be done for the Forces, still undoubtedly this year has been one of progress. Orders have been given for a field-battery, four 12 pr. Q.F. guns, Martini-Enfield rifles and carbines, spare parts, &c., to complete equipment of B.L. guns. The necessary plant to practically equip the searchlights, &c., has been received in the colony.

Telephonic communication has been established in the forts at Auckland.

An equipment of water-bottles and haversacks, medical appliances, &c., has been laid down, and is in course of supply.

An allowance of 2s. 6d., as a personal payment, has been sanctioned for six daylight parades during the year.

A Defence Committee has been set up, and the defence scheme for the colony is well in hand. Its functions are to frame a scheme under which the existing means of defence will be utilised, and not to advise as to future requirements. The scheme will be revised annually, and altered as existing conditions change. Its report will be a "secret" one.

One Imperial officer from the Royal Artillery and an ex-Imperial officer from the Royal Engineers, also two extra Artillery instructors, have been engaged, and money for the Adjutants and Infantry Instructors has been placed on the estimates.

A definite organization for the Forces has been laid down, and I trust that all ranks will combine and do their best to make this organization a success, and encourage the authorities to further liberality in the future.

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

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