

of business prevented my doing so, and I was present for a portion of the time at the camp of the Wellington District at Wanganui. I can confidently report that the work done at the Wanganui camp was good practical work, and the Volunteers who were there must have benefited by the outdoor instruction they got. The ground was good for working over for all arms except artillery, and the men spent most of the day, from sunrise to sunset, under arms, practising work which they would have to perform on service. A portion of the troops—both artillery, mounted infantry, and infantry—remained in camp for seven days, and on the last day in camp we were enabled to carry out field-firing, and the artillery were practised with Nordenfeldt 1" ammunition. It had been originally intended to hold the camp for the Wellington District near Wellington, and to include men from the Nelson District in the camp. When it was decided to hold the camp at Wanganui, it was found impracticable to bring the Nelson District men over in the time available. I hope next year, if an Easter camp is held, to include the Nelson with the Wellington District.

The available time for camp work at Easter is much too short. Two days are practically occupied in going to and returning from camp, and as at that time of the year the weather is uncertain, and the days short, we do not obtain so much value from them as I should wish.

UNIFORMS AND ACCOUTREMENTS.

The question of uniforms is still in an unsatisfactory condition, and will remain so until a definite order is issued by the Government as to what is to be the recognised dress of the different branches of the colonial military service. I have recommended that the Government should take the clothing of the troops into its own hands, and this is the only way in which I see that we will ever come to a reasonable arrangement as to the clothing of the Volunteer Force. When inquiries are made from other colonies or from representatives of newspapers, who perhaps may wish to publish typical examples of the dress of the New Zealand Forces, I can only reply that unhappily we have no typical dress, and that each corps is allowed practically to dress as it pleases. We should have a definite uniform for the colony, which all soldiers of the colony should be proud to wear.

The want of greatcoats is a drawback to the efficiency of the Force. An example of this occurred this year at Easter. The artillery corps at Auckland were ordered to man the forts on a certain night; the night turned out to be wet and cold, and two of the corps sent in medical certificates to say that the health of the men would suffer if they carried out this duty, as they had no greatcoats. If such a thing happens in peace, what will be the state of affairs on active service, when men might have to lie out night after night in the wet and cold, with no change of clothing? I have several times recommended that the Government should either make free issue of greatcoats to the troops, or else a small annual allowance to enable officers commanding corps to supply their men with this most necessary article. We are extremely short of accoutrements. No proper supply has been kept in the colony, as was evidenced when we sent away the contingents to South Africa. Owing to the necessities of the Imperial Government for accoutrements of all kinds it will be some time before we are able to obtain a supply from England, and even when all these stores that are on order now are received we shall not have sufficient to equip the whole of the Forces.

STAFF ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION.

In my previous reports I have brought strongly to notice the want of proper military organization for this colony. Up to the present time no change has been made, and we cannot have an efficient working military machine as long as the present state of affairs exists. The confusion that existed when we were despatching men to Africa brought glaringly into prominence the absolute badness of the present system. Unless the Commandant of a Force has all the military services connected with the Force under his control he cannot be responsible for the efficiency of his Force, and in this colony, where all the supply, up-keep, and issue of stores is in the hands of a Civil Department, the system would most certainly break down at once when put to the strain of war. A complete military control should be given to the Commandant and to the District Commanders under him, leaving, of course, the financial control in the hands of the Civil Department.

The Commandant should annually submit his estimates for the military necessities of the colony to the Defence Minister, and receive from him an intimation of the amount of money to be devoted to these services. The Commandant should then intimate to the Civil branch the stores to be ordered, having first obtained Ministerial authority.

These stores should be delivered to the Commandant, who would either distribute them to the several centres or hold them as a reserve. In each of the centres there should be a reserve store for that centre, to retain the stores necessary for mobilisation and those not actually in the hands of the troops.

Beyond ordering the stores, the Civil branch should have no concern in the storage or distribution of munitions of war. This should be left entirely to the military authorities, who would then feel themselves responsible, as they should be, for the efficiency of the Forces.

The Imperial military authorities to whom my several reports have been submitted concur in the views above expressed.

Under present circumstances, at the commencement of the outbreak of war, organization, which should have been completed in time of peace, would have to be commenced, and the confusion entailed by officers having to carry out duties with which they were entirely unacquainted might lead to a disaster, which in a few hours would cost the colony more than the payment of a properly organized staff would have cost them for years.

Two years ago sanction was given for the engagement of three officers from England to act as adjutants to the districts. Owing to various delays, and latterly to the fact that nearly all Imperial officers can find congenial employment in South Africa, only one officer—Captain Owen—