

has arrived in the colony. I have recommended that three more officers should be written for at once; but the scale of pay, I am afraid, is not sufficient to attract many applicants. Since submitting my last report, seven non-commissioned officers from regiments in the Imperial service have arrived in the colony, and been distributed as Instructors in the several districts, and have been of much benefit in training infantry branch of the service.

To allow of fuller instruction being given to the Volunteers, the Sergeant-major Instructors have been relieved of most of their clerical work by the appointment of a civilian clerk to assist each District Commanding Officer. I must point out that, although during the past three years the strength of the Forces has been increased from about 4,000 to 11,500 men, no increase has been made to the headquarters staff beyond the appointment of one temporary clerk to assist in the office of the Commander of the Forces; the consequence is that the Commandant has no time or opportunity to carry out his proper military duties, being burdened with details of office work. If the military staff which I have asked for in the draft estimates, which are based on my last year's recommendations and have received the approval of the Imperial military authorities, is granted, then I shall be able to devote the proper amount of time to military duties, and supervising the work in the districts throughout the colony. Discussion has been going on lately about the pay of officers of the Imperial army, and I think it is a fitting time to call attention to that of the officers of our own Colonial Forces, which is inadequate for their position and the responsible duties they have to perform. The senior officers of the Force are, in comparison with the men, about the worst paid body in any military force. This offers but a poor inducement to capable men who wish to devote their life to the military service of the colony. One officer of thirty-eight years' service is drawing £300 a year, and the same pay is drawn by most of the officers commanding districts. This sum I consider quite inadequate for the work they have to carry out.

As an illustration of how work is managed at present: An officer in charge of a fort, say, at Auckland, reports to the Commander of the Forces at Wellington that a certain service should be carried out at his fort. This report is sent on to the Under-Secretary for Defence for the information of the Public Works Department, and to get an estimate of cost from that department. From Wellington it goes back again to the Public Works Department at Auckland, to look into and submit an estimate, is then returned to the Public Works Department at Wellington, and filters back through the Under-Secretary for Defence to the Commandant, who then has to obtain Ministerial sanction for the necessary expenditure, or else request the Under-Secretary to do so. The Ministerial sanction then goes back to the Public Works Department at Wellington, who intimate the same to their department at Auckland, and the work is then carried out without any further reference to the military authorities. It would be hard to devise a better scheme of circumlocution.

The way in which the construction of works is carried out is most unsatisfactory. The military fortifications are practically entirely constructed by prison labour, under the supervision of the Public Works Department, and the amount of work done at any station depends on the amount of prison labour available. At some places this is satisfactory, but as a rule very little work can be got out of the prisoners, and the fortifications progress very slowly. When prisoners are taken off the fortifications for other work, the Defence works come to a standstill. At Wellington during the past year, although several works were planned and sanctioned, very little has been completed. This is due in a large measure to the short supply of discipline warders. Each gang of prisoners at work requires a warder in charge, and it often happens that there are several small jobs which might be completed simultaneously with the labour available, yet the want of supervision only permits of one or two of these works being carried on at the same time. I have several times recommended that an engineer officer should be appointed, whose sole work should be to supervise the preparation of plans and the construction of works throughout the colony, and I trust that my recommendations will some day be given effect to.

Owing to the formation of many new corps, the officers of which are unacquainted with the Volunteer Regulations, attention should be widely drawn to paragraph 192, Volunteer Regulations, which lays down the proper channel of appeal to the Defence Minister, and states that officers not acting in accordance with this paragraph are liable to have their commissions cancelled, and other members of the Force liable to summary dismissal.

ORGANIZATION OF MILITARY DISTRICTS.

No change has been made in the organization of military districts this year. I must point out strongly that the Nelson District has been without a permanent commanding officer for more than a year. I have several times urged that an appointment should be made, and pointed out that the efficiency of the troops in the district is suffering. The officer who is now in temporary command has not the time at his disposal, owing to his private engagements, to thoroughly carry out the work of a district commanding officer, and it is most necessary that no further delay should take place in appointing an officer of the paid staff to take over the command.

SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION.

Each year I have brought to notice the want of a school of instruction for the Volunteer Force. Officers and non-commissioned officers are generally keen to obtain practical instruction, but the conditions of the Force are such that little practical work can be carried out. The establishment of such a school would be very popular, and would, I think, be well attended by both officers and non-commissioned officers. The want of properly instructed officers came into great prominence when we despatched the contingents to Africa. I am perfectly certain that every Volunteer officer who went with the forces would have been much happier in his mind had he had some practical instruction in soldiering. In some cases men were sent as officers who had had no former military experience, and several were sent who had but very slight experience. When