

1900.

## NEW ZEALAND.

## DEFENCE FORCES OF NEW ZEALAND

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

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

SIR,—

7th August, 1900.

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

Since forwarding my last annual report, the Empire has been engaged in a war with the South African Republics, which is still proceeding. In this war all portions of the Empire have taken part, and the colonies have nobly supported the Mother-country, New Zealand being well to the front in the movement. Our men have received special commendation from all the commanding officers they have served under, and their horses have proved as useful, and stood the strain of campaigning as well, if not better, than those from any part of the world. We have sent at various times practically seventeen hundred officers and men to the war, and, in addition to each contingent being fully equipped with spare horses, we have up to date despatched 578 remounts for our men at the front.

The interest taken throughout the colony in the movement to send troops to the war has been intense, and the people of New Zealand have displayed the utmost enthusiasm and loyalty, so much so that 722 officers and men have been sent away fully equipped and horsed by public subscription, without expense to the Government. Of the 578 remounts sent from the colony, Canterbury has supplied 150, Otago 230, and Southland 39 as free gifts to replace casualties amongst the contingent horses, and, in addition, many horses were presented to the first and second contingents before they left by ladies and gentlemen in all parts of the colony.

I need hardly point out the advantages which will accrue to the colony on the return of our men from active service, by the inclusion in the Defence Forces of so many soldiers who have had actual experience of war and the conditions of active service; and I trust that all the corps throughout the colony will reap the benefit of having men in their ranks who have a practical knowledge of the requirements of war.

The interest taken in our men in Africa has been reflected on to the Defence Forces of the colony, and I think a very general desire exists to put the defence of the colony on a sound and efficient footing. This is simply a question of organization and money.

I have annually reported, hitherto without result, that we have practically no military organization, no trained staff, and that there is no freedom of action or definite responsibility thrown on the officers who would have to exercise much authority and undertake great responsibilities in time of war, and that it is absolutely necessary that this should be rectified.

The Chambers of Commerce throughout the colony have passed resolutions urging on the Government the advisability of strengthening our defences and Defence Forces; but I think that it is hardly understood what the real requirements of our defence are. Whilst the Imperial navy, which is our first line of defence, is intact and can carry on its duties, there is not any chance of an enemy making a descent in force on our coasts. What we want primarily to guard against is an attack by a few raiding cruisers which might endeavour to penetrate our defended ports, in order to destroy commerce, procure provisions, levy subsidies, &c., or disembark parties to make a land attack to disable our defences, and so enable the ships to enter our ports. Our principal ports should therefore be made safe against an enemy's cruisers, and our land Forces should be of sufficient strength to successfully cope with any raiding attacks on the ports from the land side.

We have recently considerably increased our Forces, more especially in the mounted-infantry branch, which recent experience has proved to be a most useful branch of the service, and I consider our land Forces numerically sufficient to withstand any attacks they may be called

upon to meet in the ordinary course of events. Where expenditure is most required is in perfecting the armament and equipment of our existing defences and Forces, and this should be thoroughly taken in hand at the earliest opportunity, and our men should be so equipped as to enable them to take the field at the shortest notice.

At the present time the manufacturers of warlike material and equipment are so busy with orders for the Imperial service that it is a matter of some difficulty to obtain any supplies from England, and I think it may be taken as a certainty that if the Empire was engaged in war with any European Powers, it would be impossible to obtain for the colony any large supply of arms, ammunition, or equipment during the time the war was in progress.

The colonies having joined so heartily in Imperial defence, it seems probable that in future Imperial struggles of any magnitude this colony will again wish to come forward and assist, and I think it would be a wise measure to keep a spare store of saddlery, arms, and equipment always ready to furnish a force of mounted men for service either within or without the colony.

#### PERMANENT FORCE.

During the present year two young officers have completed a course of artillery training in England, and should have returned to the colony by now, but on my recommendation they were allowed to proceed on active service in South Africa. Lieutenant Hume has also gone to South Africa, and is now attached to an Imperial battery of 4.7 in. guns. At the termination of the war he should be sent to England for a course of gunnery training. Two young officers who have been trained in the colony are now on their way to England for instruction, one in artillery and one in engineer duties. One cadet has lately joined the Force, and another should be appointed as soon as possible.

I must again point out that, owing to the increase of armament and electric-light installations, the strength of the Permanent Force is inadequate, and we should have an increase of fifteen men in No. 1 Company and ten men in No. 2 Company to efficiently provide for care of stores, &c. Should the New South Wales Government again invite us to send any officers or men in No. 1 Company to undergo a course of gunnery in Sydney, I most strongly urge that the offer be accepted. There is a thoroughly equipped school of artillery instruction in Sydney, and it would be greatly to the benefit of the Force if some of the non-commissioned officers could be put through a more extended course of instruction than we are able to give them in the colony.

I much regret having to report that a most serious accident occurred to a party of men of No. 2 Company when preparing to carry out a demolition with gun-cotton, by which three men lost their lives, and a fourth was seriously injured. A Coroner's inquest was held on the victims, which absolved the officer in charge from blame, and a full report was sent to the Imperial authorities, with a request for the highest scientific opinion on the accident. The opinion of the Home Office authorities bore out the finding of the jury. I have issued strict orders that for the future demolitions are only to be carried out under "service" conditions, and with "service" stores.

Last year I drew up regulations providing for a fixed time of enlistment for men in the Permanent Force, and for the formation of a reserve. The Defence Act in its present form does not permit of such regulations being given force to, but this is provided for in the amendments to the Act which I have submitted. We annually lose a number of trained men who leave the Force to better themselves in private life, and the colony gets no benefit from the time and expense spent on their training.

It is impossible under present circumstances to keep the requisite number of specialists required in No. 2 Company. Skilled watchmakers, electricians, engineers, carpenters, and blacksmiths will not join the Force at the present rate of pay. We have to train the men as they come to us, with a prospect of losing their services when they are fully trained. During the past year twenty-four men have left the Permanent Force for various reasons.

I must draw attention to the state of the Mount Cook barracks at Wellington. Some of the buildings are forty years old, worm-eaten, and not worth repair, and it is essential that they should be renewed at an early date. No recreation-rooms or gymnasiums have yet been provided, and this is a matter that I hope will receive early attention.

#### VOLUNTEERS.

The establishment of Volunteers as sanctioned last year for each district was:—Sufficient naval artillery corps and submarine miners to man the forts and mine-fields, one battalion mounted rifles (four companies), one battery field artillery, one company engineers, two battalions infantry, one cycle corps, one bearer corps.

Offers of the services of Volunteer corps of all arms have been sent in from every part of the colony, and the strength of the Force as now sanctioned is as follows:—

##### Auckland.

8 companies mounted rifles.	1 submarine-mining corps.
1 field battery.	1 engineer corps
2 naval artillery corps.	16 infantry corps.
1 garrison artillery corps.	1 bearer corps.

##### Wellington.

16 companies mounted rifles.	1 engineer corps.
1 field battery.	22 infantry.
3 naval artillery corps.	1 cycle corps.
1 submarine-mining corps.	1 bearer corps.

*Canterbury.*

12 companies mounted rifles and 1 honorary corps.  
1 field battery.  
1 company naval artillery.  
1 company garrison.

1 engineer corps.  
17 companies infantry.  
1 cycle corps.  
1 bearer corps.

*Otago.*

7 companies mounted rifles.  
1 field battery.  
2 companies naval artillery, including a section of submarine-miners.

1 engineer corps.  
20 companies infantry.  
1 cycle corps.  
1 bearer corps.

*Nelson.*

3 companies mounted rifles.  
1 field battery (four guns).

9 infantry corps.

Making a total for the colony of—

46 companies mounted rifles and 1 honorary corps.  
5 batteries field artillery.  
8 companies naval artillery.  
2 companies garrison artillery.

2 companies submarine-miners.  
4 companies field engineers.  
84 companies infantry.  
3 cycle corps.  
4 bearer companies.

With all corps fully up to strength, this would mean a Volunteer Force of 537 officers and 10,907 non-commissioned officers and men, exclusive of the permanent staff.

I regret that, owing to press of work in connection with the despatch of troops to South Africa, I have been unable to carry out much inspection work this year, and, as a matter of fact, with a total of over 150 corps scattered all over the colony, it is impossible to inspect each corps annually.

I have no hesitation in saying that our system of training Volunteers requires complete change, and if the colony is to benefit by the money it expends on its Defence Forces, a great deal more time must be devoted to outdoor training and field work. At present Volunteers earn their capitation largely in the drill halls, and sufficient attention is not paid to the outdoor work which is necessary for them to become efficient soldiers. Every corps in the colony has to put in a certain amount of time in camp during the year, but in all cases except that of the mounted corps the men only sleep in camp, and put in morning and evening parades, going to their usual civilian work during the day. What is wanted is an extended course of out-door instruction. It is impossible in a drill-shed to teach men how to take every advantage of cover, to familiarise them with the different varieties of ground they would have to work over on service, to teach them how to entrench themselves, all of which, in these days of smokeless powder and arms of precision, are essential parts of a soldier's training. I have tried in every way to encourage the Volunteers to come out as often as possible for daylight drills in the open, but hitherto I have met with little success. Sanction has been given for Volunteers to hold six daylight parades annually, each parade carrying a personal payment of 2s. 6d. per head to the men. The amount earned for these parades last year was only £538 18s. This year the time of the Easter camp was extended to seven days for every man who wished to stay in camp, full allowances being paid for each day. It was only in the Wellington District that any advantage was taken of this, and out of the whole Force only 420 men remained in camp for the seven days. Unless we can devise some means of getting men to come out and carry out field work by daylight, and learn the real part of a soldier's work, we cannot consider our Volunteer Forces efficient. I have often heard it stated that the great obstacle to getting the Volunteers out in the daytime was the unwillingness of the employers of labour to let their men go; but unhappily I must come to the conclusion that a great deal of the fault lies with the Volunteers themselves, and that many men who could come out have other attractions which appeal to them more than soldiering does.

**MOUNTED CORPS.**

Owing to the doings of our contingents in South Africa much interest has been taken throughout the colony in mounted corps, and we have had offers to form new corps from all parts of the country. So far, the services of twenty-eight new corps of this branch have been accepted. It is an arm which is particularly suited for use in the colony. A mounted infantryman should be more than an infantry soldier on a horse—he should be a good horseman and accustomed to horses, and know how to find his way about a country, and each corps should have a certain number of men specially trained as scouts. We have plenty of both men and horses of the proper stamp, and when our men return from Africa I anticipate great benefit to accrue to the mounted branch by having men in the ranks who have so much actual practical training in war, and this will undoubtedly have a marked effect on the efficiency of this branch of the service. It will, I hope, also enable us to get a stamp of non-commissioned officers who know and understand the importance of the duties of their position.

To obtain the proper efficiency, however, we must have more out-door work and, above all, a longer period of training in camp. The Government have decided to increase the capitation of this branch from £2 10s. to £3 10s., and I should like to see this extra £1 earned by men who would put in an extra week in camp, and not given indiscriminately to men who would capitate under present regulations. As it is almost impossible for mounted corps to assemble for the paid daylight parades, I would recommend that in the future, in addition to the payment of the extra £1 for

staying a second week in camp, they should also be paid each day for six days the 2s. 6d. personal payment that other corps can earn for daylight parades. If this is sanctioned, I should like commanding officers to arrange for a week's training camp by separate corps, and the whole battalion to go in camp afterwards for a second week and practise battalion work and extended manœuvres.

The strength of mounted corps has been increased from three officers and sixty men to four officers and eighty men, so that the number of effective rifles is now the same both in the mounted and infantry corps.

The Volunteer Regulations have been amended so that mounted corps now draw 1s. 6d. a day forage allowance for each day they are in camp.

\* Shortly before the outbreak of the war two officers had been appointed as Instructors of mounted corps, Lieut.-Colonel Robin for the South Island, and Major Davis for the North Island, but both these officers went away with the First Contingent. The experience they will have gained before they return to the colony should be of the greatest benefit both to themselves and the Force.

I have now one staff-officer for mounted duties, and his time is fully occupied in attending camps and going to out-stations to instruct; in fact, so far, he has been exclusively employed in the North Island, and has not yet been able to visit the South Island. I am very short of non-commissioned instructors for mounted troops; they are not to be obtained in the colony, but this will be remedied on the return of the contingents.

The battalion system, so far, has hardly had a fair chance with the mounted corps, as it could only be brought into reality at the time of Easter camps, the time for which the battalion was together being practically only three days, and that at a period of the year when there were many recruits in the ranks. I propose to form this branch of the service into battalions of four companies each, grouping them by convenience of locality; but I am quite at a loss what to do for officers to command the battalions and form the staff. This, I hope, may be remedied in the future, as the necessity for it is very great.

To encourage Volunteers to provide themselves with a good class of horse, I recommend that at the big agricultural shows the Government should offer prizes for the best and most suitable troop-horses, the property of Volunteers. To qualify for such a prize a horse must have undergone at least one year's complete training with a mounted corps.

#### FIELD ARTILLERY.

Officers and men of this branch of the service take much interest in this work, but owing to being armed for the most part with obsolete weapons and to lack of opportunity for getting any practical work, this arm of the force cannot be considered efficient. The very life of field artillery depends on its mobility, and this is a quality absolutely wanting in our field artillery. To attempt to bring a field battery into action with one pair of horses per gun—in some cases with makeshift harness—is an absurdity, and a very practical danger to the men working the battery.

A 15-pr. field battery has just been received from England with full equipment of guns, wagons, and harness. This, I understand, has cost the Government about £10,000, and if the old system of horsing and drill is to be continued it is money practically thrown away.

I proposed that a certain number of horses should be bought, and that twenty-six men should be enlisted and thoroughly trained as artillery drivers. This would ensure at least the guns of the battery being mobile and capable of being efficiently served. The remainder of the men for working the battery—*i.e.*, gunners, &c.—would be Volunteers, as would also the officers, and this would be following out the system in vogue with our garrison artillery, where the Permanent Force supply the specialists and carry out the technical duties, and the Volunteers man the batteries. Neither drivers nor horses can be properly trained for field battery work unless they are being constantly exercised at that work. This scheme has not been accepted owing to its cost. The only other method I can suggest to ensure anything like efficiency is to specially enlist in the Volunteer force a certain number of men as drivers, each man to provide a pair of suitable horses, and always to turn out for parade with the same horses. They should parade for battery drill at least once a week, and remain in camp during the time of the annual camp, and also attend Easter Camp. A certain number of non-commissioned officers should be engaged on the same terms.

To induce Volunteers to undertake this, a substantial retaining-fee would have to be offered them.

The lessons of the present war in Africa have so clearly shown the value of mobility in field guns that I feel it is my duty to point out this deficiency in our field artillery as strongly as possible.

#### NAVAL AND GARRISON ARTILLERY.

Out of a total of eight naval artillery corps in the colony, only four have taken advantage of the daylight parades, and the garrison artillery corps have not turned out at all for these special parades. This branch of the service should avail itself of every opportunity of turning out and getting into the forts by daylight. The work of training depression range-finder and gun-layer specialists can only be carried out efficiently in the daylight. These are most important duties of garrison artillery. The efficiency of the service of the guns depends largely on their proper performance, and every opportunity should be taken by officers commanding corps of getting their men trained in these special duties. We have not a sufficiency of the Permanent Force to carry out all specialists' duties, and no men to replace casualties, so that a certain number of men in each Volunteer artillery corps should be efficiently trained as specialists. I do not consider that sufficient allowance of gun-ammunition is made to the Artillery Volunteers for practice purposes. The ammunition for heavy B.-L. guns is expensive, and, owing to wear on the gun, it is not advisable to carry out a very heavy annual practice from the B.-L. guns; but I propose

to establish at a small cost practice batteries of 64-pr. R.M.L. guns at Auckland and Wellington, practice from which can be carried out at a small cost, and instruction can be given in the technical work of a battery in action. Unfortunately, owing to press of work, I could not complete the arrangements for carrying out prize-firing by companies last year, but this I hope to arrange in time for this year's drills. With the exception of Port Chalmers Naval Artillery, all the corps carried out their annual training in the forts. Owing to the special condition of labour at Port Chalmers and the want of a proper launch, it has been impossible to arrange hitherto for this corps to carry out its training in their work of defence. This is much to be regretted, as the only gun they have to drill with at the Port is a 64-pr. R.M.L. gun, and the work which the corps has allotted to them to defend contains in addition guns of other calibres. I hope when we are able to transfer the launch "Ellen Ballance" to Port Chalmers that this state of affairs will be remedied.

Owing to increase of armament and the necessity for providing reliefs of gun-detachments, authority has been given to raise another company of naval artillery in Wellington. This matter is now in hand, and a second company of the Wellington Naval Artillery is under course of formation.

The corps of this branch of the service take much interest in their work, which is of a technical and laborious character, and deserve every credit for the time and attention they devote to their duty.

The title of "naval" is misleading, and, if an Imperial naval reserve is formed in the colony, will lead to some confusion. The corps are purely garrison artillery corps. They man the forts, and have nothing to do with floating armaments. In case of war we could not spare any of them from their duty in the colony.

#### SUBMARINE MINING CORPS.

The difficulty of training men in this branch of the service is great, as among the members of the submarine mining corps we require to have specialists well versed in electricity and in the manipulation of delicate electrical instruments, also with a knowledge of electric-lighting and engine-driving. The ordinary submarine-mining work also is quite out of the common, and a man requires special training to fit him for this work. The submarine mining corps go out to camp for sixteen days annually, but they can only devote their mornings and evenings to their military work. As it is extremely necessary for our defence that these corps should receive as much training as possible, the Government, on my recommendation, has allowed the corps in future to carry out daylight parades with detachments of not less than fourteen men. Such parades carry a personal payment of 2s. 6d. per head to the men, the total amount earned by the corps during the year not to exceed the sum which would be paid if the whole corps attended the six daylight parades during the year. The two corps at present in existence take much interest in their work, and I hope that this concession and the provision of suitable submarine-mining boats will greatly increase their efficiency and value. One submarine-mining boat has already been ordered from England, and provision is, I understand, to be made in this year's estimates for a second boat. One of these boats will be located at Auckland and one at Wellington. The present launch at Auckland is worn-out and almost beyond repair, and her condition is such that I have given orders that she is not to be used for the transport of men. The defence launch at Lyttelton has been sold out of the service, and we have to depend on hiring to carry out our work at that port.

#### INFANTRY.

The battalion organization of this branch of the service has been in force for the last two years, and is working satisfactorily. With country corps, the battalion can only become a reality during the time they are together at Easter camp, but in the centres battalions actually exist. I think the time is now ripe for this system being adopted in its entirety in the centres. In the four principal cities, where battalions exist, men should be enlisted for the battalions and not for special corps; and the question of clothing, discipline, and finance should be in the hands of the battalion staff. This would effect a considerable amount of saving of expense to the different units, and would facilitate instruction and administration generally. A difficulty exists in the fact that at present some corps are considerably in credit and others in debt, but this financial difficulty might be got over by the gradual amalgamation of company funds, to extend over, say, a period of three years, the funds at the end of the three years to be administered entirely by the battalion staff. I reported last year that full benefit had not been taken of the authority given to hold six daylight parades annually, with a personal payment of 2s. 6d. per man. This is very much to be regretted, as the intention in holding these parades was to devote the time to sound, practical work, for the exercise of which so little opportunity occurs. I should like to see the system introduced that I have recommended for mounted corps, a certain amount of the capitation to be earned as at present—each corps to be allowed to go into its own company camp for company training—the balance of the capitation to be earned by attendance at battalion camp; the men also earning 2s. 6d. per head now allowed for daylight parades.

Speaking generally, the officers are keen to learn their duty, and only want sufficient opportunity to perfect themselves in practical work. I do not suppose that there is any corps in the colony that has ever had any practical instruction in throwing up hasty entrenchments, and, the experiences of the present war having brought very clearly to light the necessity for such instruction, I hope that opportunity will be given for carrying it out.

The course of musketry-instruction should be made much more practical. Hitherto the allowance of ammunition has been at the rate of 150 rounds per man, 100 rounds to be expended on target-practice and fifty rounds issued at the discretion of the Officer Commanding the District for any purpose he thinks fit. This I propose to increase to 200 rounds, 100 rounds to be expended as at present, fifty rounds in field-firing under the supervision of one of the

permanent staff, and the remaining fifty rounds at the discretion of the Officer Commanding the District expended in firing at moving and disappearing targets, if possible at an unknown range. This, I hope, will make the work more practical and interesting to the Volunteers.

I am glad to be able to report an improvement in the non-commissioned officer ranks, and I hope they will benefit greatly by the good instruction we are now able to give them. Any increases in the Force will naturally necessitate an increase in the number of Instructors.

#### ENGINEER CORPS.

The strength of each engineer corps has lately been increased by one officer and twenty non-commissioned officers and men, this being a most important branch of the Defence Force. The existing corps take much pains to make themselves efficient, but part of their equipment is still lacking, and I trust that steps will be taken to complete it. I am endeavouring to raise a corps in Wellington, where one is much needed, and I hope that it will shortly be established.

#### CYCLE CORPS.

Up to the present I have not been able to obtain the services of a cycle corps at Auckland, but such corps exist at the other three centres, and in case of war would be of great utility. A supply of 303 rifles with short bayonets has been received for these corps. The rifle-clips manufactured in the colony have been found to be of unsuitable material, and a pattern of clip has been obtained from England which is satisfactory. I have recommended that a supply of these clips should be obtained. On receipt of the clips the special rifles will be issued.

#### MEDICAL SERVICES.

I regret to say that the medical branch of the Volunteer service is not in a very satisfactory condition. We have a large list of medical officers, and whenever a new corps is formed a medical officer is, as a rule, appointed as honorary surgeon to the corps. It is only a small number of these medical officers who seem to take any interest in volunteering, beyond getting the military medical titles and having their names registered on the general medical list. Very few of them attend parades or go into camp with their corps, and many of them even do not go to the trouble of supplying themselves with uniforms. A few of the medical officers take interest in their work, and have given up much time to the Volunteer movement. If we could see our way to properly equip and organize a medical staff, I have no doubt the Volunteer officers would rise to the occasion. To each district we supplied a set of field medical panniers and surgical haversacks, but we had to send some of these off to South Africa with the contingents, and are expecting a fresh supply from Home. Each of our forts should, by this time, be supplied with certain medical requisites to enable first-aid and dressing to be given in case of any accident occurring at drill or practice. To properly equip a medical corps at each centre would be a matter of some considerable expense, and, under present circumstances, in war time we would have to trust to expresses being improvised as ambulances for carrying the sick and wounded, and would have to ask the hospital authorities to give us every benefit they could from the appurtenances at their command.

I recommend that for the future no medical officer should be allowed to retain his name on the list if he has not attended at least six parades during the year and given instruction in ambulance work at least six times during the year, or who has not, without very good reason, attended Easter camps at least once during the past two years. Now that we have so largely increased our forces, the Medical Bearer Company in our centres should be increased to a strength of one surgeon-major, two surgeon-captains, and fifty non-commissioned officers and men, and a bearer company of the strength of the present establishment should be raised at Nelson.

#### RIFLE CLUBS.

The question of the recognition of rifle clubs is now before the Government, and in the amendments to the Defence Act these clubs have been included as part of the Defence Forces of the colony. They should have a military organization, learn sufficient drill to enable them to be assimilated into the Volunteers in war time, and be armed with rifles of the same calibre as the Government arms.

#### NEW ZEALAND RIFLE ASSOCIATION.

No meeting of this Rifle Association has been held during the past year. It seems to me that the time is now ripe for the Government to take over the affairs of the association, and to render it a concern of some practical utility to the colony, and a means of encouraging rifle-shooting in a really useful form. What we want is men trained to use the rifle under the varying circumstances which would arise on active service, and not so much to encourage shooting at standing targets, where every possible advantage is given to the individual, under circumstances which would be but rarely likely to occur in the field. It is quite sound to give men a training in the handling of arms, and to make them good shots at anything that is likely to expose itself and give a good prolonged mark for a man to aim at; but in addition we want a good sound training in practical work, such as snap-shooting and shooting at moving and disappearing objects, which the Rifle Association does not encourage. The Government has offered good prizes for Loyd-Lindsay and field-firing competitions, but hitherto these matches have not met with the success they deserve.

#### CAMPS.—BATTALIONS AND COMPANIES THROUGHOUT THE COLONY.

All corps, as usual, have gone into their training camps during the year, and the usual Easter camps were held. The Easter camp for the Auckland District was held at Auckland, that for the Wellington District at Wanganui, Nelson District at Nelson. A combined camp at Oamaru was held for the Otago and Canterbury Districts. I proposed attending the camp at Oamaru, but press

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—

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

a district has raised, equipped, and armed a body of men at its own expense, I can quite understand the desire that these men should be officered by gentlemen from their own district; but in my opinion it would have been a very much better thing for both the men and the colony had we selected the best trained officers that could be got from any part of the colony to officer the troops. Had a school of instruction been established in the colony when I first recommended it, we would by this time have had a considerable nucleus of officers available, who had undergone some practical military training.

#### ACTIVE UNATTACHED LIST.

This list still remains in a most unsatisfactory state. It is composed mostly of men who, whatever they might have done in the past, at present seem to take little or no interest in their military duties, although they are supposed to be Active Staff Officers. This year, again, officers were ordered to attend Easter camp. Very few of them came, and I have recommended that the names of nineteen of them should be struck off the list as inefficient. The regulations for attachment to this list should be entirely altered, and only officers who we can reasonably expect to take an active interest in volunteering, and give due assistance to the Commanding Officers of Districts, should be appointed to the list. Failure to attend two Easter camps in three years should entail the cancelling of their commissions.

#### DEFENCE SCHEME.

The defence scheme for the colony, which was drawn up in 1898, has been returned from England approved. The scheme was based upon the number of men which then composed the force. Numbers of corps, both mounted and infantry, have recently been accepted from all parts of the colony, without any reference to the suitability of their locations from a defence point of view, and this, of course, has entirely upset the scheme and necessitated a new one being drawn up. With a constantly varying strength of the Forces it is hopeless trying to make out a defence scheme which will be a permanent one.

Having decided on the minimum numbers of each arm which are absolutely necessary for the defence of the colony, the scheme should be based on these numbers, allocated in the most convenient places for speedy mobilisation. Surplus corps above these numbers should be treated in an auxiliary scheme annually revised, so that as long as we kept our forces up to the minimum strength there would be no great disturbance of the main scheme. This minimum number should always be kept fully armed and supplied with accoutrements and ready to take the field at once. They should, in fact, form the first army division of the colony, and their maintenance should be the first charge on our military resources.

#### ARMS.

Had it not been for the war in South Africa, and the large increase of strength in the Volunteer Force of this colony, all the troops would by now have been armed with .303 weapons. Nearly 1,200 carbines were taken away to Africa by the different contingents. A proportion of these, or arms to replace them, I hope will be recovered from the Imperial Government. Magazine arms are on order from England, and I recommend that the Permanent Force and Volunteers should be equipped with magazine arms, and that rifle clubs, when they become a portion of the Defence Forces, should have as their recognised weapon the single-loading .303 rifle.

I wish very strongly to bring to notice the practical impossibility of procuring either arms or warlike equipment when the Empire is in a state of war. If proper provision is not made in time of peace when material can be procured, it is hopeless to endeavour to procure any supply when the time of pressure comes.

#### AMMUNITION.

At the present time we have a contract for the supply of small-arm ammunition with the Colonial Ammunition Company at Auckland, and this contract practically ties us to one firm for our ammunition supply. The contract will shortly expire, and it is for consideration on what terms it should be renewed. I have no complaint to make of the quality of the ammunition supply by the company, but I must point out that it is a fallacy to call the Auckland works an ammunition factory. They are simply workshops in which the different parts of the ammunition are put together. Every article that is used in the manufacture of the ammunition is obtained from outside the colony, so that in war time all these articles would, I presume, be contraband of war, and we would be no better off in obtaining the ammunition supply than if we imported the complete ammunition direct from England. To establish a factory in which explosives, bullets, and all the parts which go to make up a complete cartridge were manufactured would entail a very large expense. It is for consideration whether it is advisable to again tie our hands in the matter of ordering ammunition supplies by binding ourselves to one firm which puts together the ammunition in the colony. A fair way, I think, would be to guarantee the firm a fixed annual order on the understanding that they kept sufficient material of all kinds in the colony to enable them to turn out at once a certain largely-increased supply in case of urgent necessity. Any quantity of ammunition in excess of the annual order that we might require should be open to tender from any other ammunition companies carrying out business within the limits of the Empire.

I have seen suggestions made, that either the Government should undertake or invite firms to undertake the manufacture of ammunition for heavy guns in the colony; but from my own experience I know that the cost of establishing the necessary works at present would be prohibitive.

#### DRILL-HALLS.

I reported last year the drill-halls at Auckland and Christchurch are in a bad condition, and, together with the one at Wellington, are too small for the number of men they have to accom-

moderate. It is imperative that early steps should be taken to put the halls at Auckland and Christchurch into a proper state of repair, and to enlarge them, so as to accommodate the increased number of troops. £300 has been expended in making the Wellington drill-hall watertight and in painting it, but the accommodation is very cramped, and its extension should be taken in hand if we want to retain the present establishment of Volunteers. Many corps throughout the colony are applying for grant in aid of their drill-sheds, and a large sum will be required for this service this year.

#### RANGES.

The question of the provision of rifle-ranges is a pressing one, and one which also unfortunately entails the expenditure of a large amount of money. I reported last year that the Auckland range was only suitable for use for trained men, and under careful supervision. It is not safe for volley-firing, and on that account the corps in Auckland had to be excused their volley-firing this year. I have heard of a suitable site near Auckland, on which field- and volley-firing can be carried out. Matters have been put in train for making provision for a range. The ranges at the Thames and Onehunga are unsuitable.

Extra land has been bought in Polhill Gully, and the Wellington range is now suitable for use with the .303 arm. A good deal, however, requires to be done in the way of improving firing points, &c., and this work is now in hand. Polhill Gully is a most accessible range for the Wellington Volunteers, but, the sides being so steep, no field-firing can be carried out there. There will be no difficulty in procuring a range for field and long-range firing accessible by rail for the Wellington Volunteers, provided funds can be found.

The acquisition of a new range at Wanganui is being dealt with.

A new range is being acquired at Sumner for the Christchurch Volunteers, which should be ready this year. The Pelichet Bay range has been purchased at Dunedin, which is a good range and close to the town.

In the amendments to the Defence Act, a clause has been inserted giving the Government power to take up land for rifle-ranges, on the same lines as land for defence-works can be taken. With the increase of population and the spreading of towns, it will become necessary for the Government to have this power to ensure a due provision of range accommodation for our Defence Forces.

#### CONCLUSION.

I can again report a considerable improvement in the condition of the Volunteer Force, and a keen military spirit and wish for improvement is general throughout the colony.

We have an opportunity now of getting a really serviceable Force together. The men are available, money, I hope, will be forthcoming to properly arm and equip them, and a suitable military organization will, I sincerely trust, at last be allowed.

The defences of the principal forts have been improved, eight more Maxim guns have been ordered, a 15-pr. B.L. battery has been received, and another is on order from England. One submarine mining-boat is, I hope, now under construction, and the money for the provision of another has been placed on the estimates. Stores to augment the equipment are under supply, and four 12-pr. Q.-F. guns have been received. The past year has certainly been one of much progress.

A. P. PENTON,

Colonel, Commanding the New Zealand Forces.

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