

1901.

NEW ZEALAND.

DEFENCE FORCES OF NEW ZEALAND

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

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

SIR,—

1st September, 1901.

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.

The past year has been a memorable one in the military annals of the colony. Our men in South Africa have maintained the high reputation the New Zealand soldiers earned during the first year of the war, and those now on active service are worthy successors to the men who fought and served so well during the earlier phases of the war.

Practically the whole of the first five contingents have returned to the colony, and the Sixth and Seventh Contingents, to the number of 1,175 are still in Africa. These latter contingents were armed, equipped, and horsed entirely at the expense of the Imperial Government, and no horses were sent with them from the colony.

On the invitation of the New South Wales Government, a detachment of seventy-three mounted rifles was sent over to Sydney to attend the Commonwealth celebrations in January of this year, and for the first time in history troops representing all the Australasian Colonies were brigaded together. Our men bore themselves very well, and excited much interest, especially the Maori portion of the troops. They were treated with the greatest kindness, and the military authorities did all in their power to make the men comfortable. Unfortunately, owing to the great demand for horses at the time, our men were not as well mounted as they might have been, but the cost of transport of horses to Australia was too great to allow of the troops taking over their own horses.

An Imperial representative corps, and a mixed corps of Indian officers and non-commissioned officers, were sent by the Imperial and Indian Governments to attend the Commonwealth celebrations in Sydney in January last, and during the month of February these corps visited the colony. They were heartily welcomed by the people of New Zealand at each place they visited, and I am sure all officers and men will long remember with pleasure the friendly and cordial reception accorded to them. The Government sanctioned the concentration of our Volunteers at each place visited by these troops, so that as many of our men as possible should see the trained and disciplined troops. This had an excellent effect on the forces as a whole, and many of them saw for the first time the result of systematic military training. The officer commanding the Imperial troops very kindly gave military displays whenever an opportunity offered, which were much appreciated by both Volunteers and civilians. The way in which the mounted corps and individual officers came forward with their horses to mount the Imperial cavalry and artillery, and the Indian cavalry, was worthy of all praise. Our Volunteers did all that lay in their power to make the stay of the guests a pleasant one, and a feeling of camaraderie sprang up between Imperial, Indian, and Colonial soldiers worthy of the army of the Empire.

A detachment of forty-three mounted men and 171 dismounted men, representing all arms of the service, attended the celebrations in Melbourne in connection with the opening of the Federal Parliament. Again they were treated with the greatest consideration and kindness. A special train was provided to take them from Sydney to Melbourne and back, and excellent arrangements were made by the Victorian military authorities for feeding the men on the journey. The men compared most favourably in physique and drill with all the other colonial troops. The New Zealanders were included in my brigade in the reviews at both Sydney and Melbourne, and carried themselves so as to be a credit to the colony. Till this year the New Zealand Volunteers had had practically no chance—with the exception of those engaged on active service in Africa—of seeing other troops than those of their own colony, and the result of the visit of the Imperial and Indian troops to the colony, and of our troops to Australia, will, I hope, raise a spirit of rivalry and a wish to excel, which must be a benefit to the whole force.

During the visit of their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York to New Zealand all district troops were concentrated in the headquarters of districts to take part in the celebrations. In each centre there was an excellent muster of Volunteers, and His Royal Highness, before leaving the colony, was kind enough to express to me his satisfaction at the way in which all the military

duties were carried out by the Volunteers. A review was held at Auckland, the strength on parade being 131 officers, 2,046 men, and 705 cadets. This was entirely confined to the Auckland District, the Royal Navy furnishing, in addition, a force of 44 officers and 1,111 men.

At Christchurch a review was held in Hagley Park on the 24th June, at which a total of 430 officers and 7,335 men, and 2,980 cadets were present, with sixteen guns. This was the largest muster of men from any one colony that was gathered together during the visit of His Royal Highness to Australasia, and was in every way a credit to the colony of New Zealand. Of this number, 18 officers and 516 men came from Auckland; the balance were from other Volunteer districts. Many of the men came from long distances, and put up with great inconveniences, in order to attend. I do not think that any one present at this most successful function regretted any sacrifice he had made to get there. The turnout was excellent, and nowhere in the world could more excellent material for soldiers be found than was in evidence at the Christchurch review.

PERMANENT FORCE.

Last year an increase was made to the Permanent Force to enable the necessary work in the fortifications and mine-fields to be carried on efficiently. Owing, however, to the decision that preference was to be given for all appointments in the defence forces to men who had seen service in South Africa, this increase has not been completed, and at the present time we are thirty-two short in No. 1 Company, and seven short in No. 2 Company. These vacancies will, I hope, now be shortly filled up.

A great step in advance has been made by sending officers and men of the Permanent Force to England for training. At the present time Captain Hume and Lieutenant Gardiner of No. 1 Service Company, together with six non-commissioned officers, are going through the Long Course at the School of Gunnery, Shoeburyness. Lieutenant Symon, of No. 2 Service Company, is going through a course of submarine mining at Chatham. If the system is continued of sending officers and men from the Permanent Force to England to undergo a course of instruction in the most modern methods of artillery and submarine-mining defence, in a few years' time it should not be necessary for the colony to employ either artillery officers or engineer officers from the Imperial Service. It must not be considered, however, that an officer who has once gone through a course in England is for ever afterwards fitted to take up an important position in the local artillery and submarine-mining defence. The sciences of artillery and engineering progress so much and undergo such frequent changes that local officers should be sent home frequently to enable them to keep pace with the times.

The Amendment of the Defence Act passed last session provides for men of the Permanent Force being enlisted for a fixed period with the colours and for the formation of the reserve. This is quite a step in the right direction.

The establishment of specialists has been laid down for both No. 1 and No. 2 Companies, and the men who perform specialist duties are paid at a special rate. If a man fails to keep himself up to his work as a specialist he is disgraced, and loses his special pay.

I understand that the men of the Police Force are now given the greater part of their uniform by the Government, and I would strongly recommend that the same concession be extended to the Permanent Force. It would cost the Government but little and would give great satisfaction to the Force.

Since my last report the Permanent Force at Wellington have gone into occupation of the Mount Cook Gaol buildings, which have proved eminently suitable as barracks. Each man has a small room to himself, and there is excellent provision for mess and recreation rooms. Gymnastic appliances are also fitted up there.

VOLUNTEERS.

The establishment of Volunteers has been very largely increased during the last year. In accordance with the recommendation of the Joint Defence (Secret) Committee of the Houses of Parliament of last session, practically all corps that offered their services to the State have been accepted, and the strength of the Volunteer Force on 1st July stands at a total of 17,057, divided as follows:—

<i>Auckland.</i>	
19 companies mounted rifles.	1 engineer corps.
1 field battery.	20 infantry corps.
2 naval artillery corps.	1 bearer corps.
1 garrison artillery corps.	1 cycle corps.
1 submarine-mining corps.	2 garrison bands.
<i>Wellington.</i>	
21 companies mounted rifles.	38 infantry corps.
1 field battery.	1 cycle corps.
3 naval artillery corps.	1 bearer corps.
1 submarine-mining corps.	3 garrison bands.
1 engineer corps.	
<i>Canterbury.</i>	
15 companies mounted rifles.	20 infantry corps and 1 honorary corps.
1 field battery.	1 cycle corps.
1 company naval artillery.	1 bearer corps.
1 company garrison.	2 garrison bands.
1 engineer corps.	

Otago.

12 companies mounted rifles.	28 infantry corps
1 field battery.	1 cycle corps.
2 companies naval artillery, including a section of submarine miners.	1 bearer corps.
1 engineer corps.	3 garrison bands.

Nelson.

4 companies mounted rifles.	1 bearer corps.
1 field battery (four guns).	2 garrison bands.
11 infantry corps.	
Making a total for the colony of—	
71 companies mounted rifles.	2 companies submarine miners.
5 batteries field artillery.	4 companies field engineers.
8 companies naval artillery.	117 infantry corps and 1 honorary corps.
2 companies garrison artillery.	5 bearer companies.
4 cycle corps.	12 garrison bands.

I have before reported and brought to notice the fact that our system of training the Volunteers is wrong, and requires a complete change. Recent events in South Africa have shown most clearly the necessity for an extended course of field training. Our Volunteer infantry is recruited very largely from townspeople, and except during the time in camp, nearly all their training is carried on in the drill-hall. Modern fighting requires that each man should have an intelligent knowledge of the country, and be able to take full advantage of all cover existing on the ground he has to work over. Fighting is carried on at very largely extended intervals, and discipline is more than ever a necessity in the soldier's training. To fit men for soldiers nowadays, training is required that cannot possibly be given in the drill-hall, and officers and men must be encouraged to train in the open as much as possible.

The Joint Defence Committee recommended that during camps of instruction Volunteers should remain in camp during the whole period of seven consecutive days, and be paid by the Government for such attendance, but so far no steps have been taken in this direction. This recommendation has my full support; but I am afraid it will be found almost impossible to carry out, owing to the heavy expense that would be entailed, estimated at from £20,000 to £25,000 annually. To enable them to leave their work for a week the men would have to be paid approximately the same amount as they were earning whilst at work. I would suggest an alternative plan in the shape of an allowance being made for so many whole days' training during the year, and that in order to qualify for capitation a man must earn a certain proportion of this allowance. In this way I think the men would come out on holidays, &c.

An equipment of entrenching tools has been ordered from England, and on receipt I hope that Volunteer officers will take every opportunity of exercising their men in the very necessary work of constructing hasty entrenchments. This work could be carried out at night time, and very often in the vicinity of the drill-sheds.

Provision was made in the Defence Amendment Act last year to abolish the election of officers by the men. This was, however, not agreed to by Parliament, and the old style of "election" still prevails. In one case, shortly after officers had been elected by a corps, the men requested them to resign, as they did not consider them suitable. It is the worst method I know of for obtaining officers, and entirely unsuited for any military organization.

I must impress on the Government the urgent necessity for the higher training of the Volunteer officer. In an article written from Pretoria on the 20th April last, by the special correspondent of the *Times*, he refers very strongly to the necessity for high training of the Volunteer officers. He points out that what has prejudiced the success of many of the colonial corps and of the Imperial Yeomanry has been the fact that "The officers have not known their work." He also says that "A study of the colonial forces in Africa has shown that, although half-trained and raw men of the right class can rapidly be turned into efficient soldiers when well led, yet the training of the officers who make and lead these men should be complete, if the nation is to depend upon its volunteer resources to defend it against a disciplined enemy." These remarks, in my opinion, apply forcibly to this colony, and it has been my invariable experience that corps possessing good officers are always the most efficient.

The School of Instruction has been established to inaugurate a system of military education for officers and non-commissioned officers, and I hope that when officers have once commenced to study military subjects, they will continue in the effort to perfect their military knowledge.

MOUNTED CORPS.

I always considered the mounted branch a most important portion of the defence forces, and one which should be encouraged in every way. The records of our men in South Africa show that we have in the colony absolutely the right material for mounted rifles, and that our troops compare very favourably with other mounted corps of the Empire. I have before recommended that the period for training of mounted corps in camp should be extended. Each company should be allowed to hold a week's camp for company training, and at a later date each battalion should be assembled for a week's battalion training. This would establish a healthy rivalry between the corps of the battalions, accustom them to work together, and would give the battalion officers an opportunity of handling their men as a battalion, of which, under present circumstances, they get very few chances.

The battalion camp, as recommended in my last year's report, would only cost the Government the same sum that the men could earn if they all attended the six annual daylight parades already sanctioned, with an addition of the forage allowance of 1s. 6d. per day per horse during the camp.

The mounted corps in each district have now been formed into battalions as far as possible, and I sincerely hope that efforts will be made to give the battalions a true existence. Each battalion should have a paid non-commissioned officer attached to it as a drill-instructor of the battalion, and the officer commanding each military district should have an officer on his staff to take charge of the mounted branch of the district entirely, and be responsible to the officer commanding the district for the efficient training of the mounted corps.

The drill-book for mounted rifles requires revision and amplification in matters of battalion drill. We have so many officers in the colony now, who have had experience in mounted work in South Africa, that there should be no difficulty in bringing out a thoroughly up-to-date drill-book for this branch of the service.

FIELD ARTILLERY.

During my term of office a great improvement has taken place in this branch of the service. In my first report written in 1897, I drew attention to the important part that field-guns would play in the defence of the colony, and strongly urged that four field batteries should be ordered from England. At that time the batteries, with the exception of the one in Wellington, were armed with obsolete 9-pounder R. B. L. guns. Since then two batteries of field artillery have been ordered from England. One of these is now manned by the D Battery in Wellington, and the second is gradually arriving from England and will be handed over finally to the A Battery at Auckland. The field batteries at Christchurch and Nelson are armed with 6-pounder Q. F. guns, and only one of the obsolete 9-pounder R. B. L. batteries is now in existence. I urged the Government to obtain modern field-guns, but I understand that action is deferred until some definite decision is come to as to the future field-gun for Imperial service.

A portion of the scheme I proposed last year for horsing and manning the field artillery has been sanctioned by the Government. As the commencement, twelve horses and six drivers from the Permanent Force have been allowed for the D Battery at Wellington; but so far only three really suitable horses have been handed over by the Stock Department, and only four drivers have been enlisted. I have obtained from the Stock Department nine other horses *pro tem.*, which will be exchanged with them when suitable horses are purchased. The D Battery now turns out with one or two of its guns horsed and manned on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, with most excellent results. All ranks take a great interest in the work, and this is the first step towards making our field artillery mobile. Field-guns without mobility are useless, and unless the Government intends to seriously consider the question of making the field artillery a really mobile force it will only be a waste of money their making any further purchases.

In the course of the past five years two field batteries have been ordered, and one of them has been supplied. I can only hope, for the sake of the colony, that it may not take another period of five years to complete the re-arming of the Field Artillery.

NAVAL AND GARRISON ARTILLERY.

I instituted this year competitive heavy-gun practice between all the naval and garrison artillery companies in the colony, with very happy results. All corps enter into the competition with great zest, and the several practices were made to correspond as nearly as possible with the conditions that would exist on actual service. An extra expenditure of ammunition was allowed for this competition, and the experience gained was most beneficial to the Volunteers. Some of the companies were handicapped by having to fire from muzzle-loading guns, but this was minimised as far as possible by making special allowances, based on practical results, which had been worked out in the Imperial service. The practice all round was very good, the winning company (the Wellington Navals) making a figure of merit of 0.874, and the second company (the Dunedin Navals) making a figure of merit of 0.773, seven companies qualifying as first-class companies and two as third-class.

The Port Chalmers Company has done its best during the past year to carry out training in the work of defence allotted to it at Tairoa Heads, but, as I have already reported, owing to local conditions, it cannot train continuously during its annual camp in its defence work.

I have several times drawn attention to the fact that the term "naval" is very misleading with regard to this portion of the Volunteer Force. Its duties are purely those of garrison artillery, and have nothing whatever to do with any naval work.

When in Melbourne the naval portion of our "Representative Corps" was brigaded with the Australian Naval Brigade, a force which actually mans and works ships and their guns; and I know that our men felt keenly the difference between the true and the so-called "naval" force. The result of the Melbourne visit will be, I hope, to turn one or two companies of our "navals" into garrison artillery companies.

The officers, non-commissioned officers and men of this branch of the Force take a very keen interest in their work, and devote much time to learning duties which are both technical and arduous.

I should much like to see the recommendation of the Joint Defence Committee carried out, that the garrison artillery and submarine-mining corps should have their capitation increased to £3 10s. The work these corps have to perform entails much more wear and tear on the clothing than that

of mounted or infantry corps. A modification might also be made in the regulations under which the garrison artillery can earn the 2s. 6d. payment for daylight parades. It sometimes happens that a garrison artillery company has to man two works, or one work and part of another. I recommend that when a company turns out in sufficient strength to completely man (according to the manning details) a whole work, it may be allowed to draw the 2s. 6d. per man, although the total strength of the parade may not come up to the two-thirds strength of the company.

SUBMARINE-MINING CORPS.

Owing to the want of proper sub-mining boats, not much real practical work in laying mines, &c., can be carried out. At Auckland, instruction on the water is absolutely suspended owing to there being no boat available for the service. The "Isabel" broke down finally some months ago, and I recommended the purchase of a suitable boat to replace her, as the price asked for hiring a steamer was prohibitive. The engineer's survey and report on the proposed purchase was satisfactory, but the Government declined to purchase, and very great inconvenience has been experienced at Auckland, both in sub-mining work and in the construction of defence-works, by the want of a proper boat. Had a boat been purchased, it could afterwards have been transferred to Lyttelton for use as a submarine miner at that station.

The two submarine-mining boats ordered from England are now approaching completion, and should arrive in this colony by the end of the year.

The sub-mining corps at Auckland has been in existence a long time, and all ranks take much interest in their work. The Wellington corps is, I hope, now established on a sound basis, and it will be necessary before very long to raise a third corps for Lyttelton; but this cannot be taken in hand until the necessary buildings, &c., have been completed. The site for these buildings cannot be definitely settled until the Government comes to a decision on the question of the alteration of the Lyttelton defences.

INFANTRY.

The strength of this branch of the Force has been so largely increased that it has been necessary to entirely rearrange the establishment of the county battalions.

Now that the Defence Act has been amended, there is no reason to prevent the battalions in the four centres being worked as battalions, and not as an aggregate of separate companies. There is no doubt that the battalion system is the proper military organization, and one that would have to be carried out in war time. It is not much good having an organization in peace which is not fitted for war. I can quite understand the feeling of company officers and men in not wanting to lose their company individuality, but if the battalion system was properly administered, there would be no necessity for corps absolutely to lose their individuality, and they would gain in many ways by becoming a substantive portion of a larger unit.

This branch of the Force particularly wants an outdoor training. It is probable in the near future that most of the ceremonial and show work will be discontinued, and the time thus saved should be devoted to real practical work.

The Wellington battalion last Easter undertook a three days' march in the Wairarapa. They carried with them their own camp equipment, and made their own arrangements as to commissariat and transport. The march was altogether a successful one, and officers and men in a few days gained more practical experience of soldiering than they could have done from any amount of drill-hall training. I hope that other battalions will follow their example. In the summer months it would be often possible to have a two days' march at the week-ends, this would be instructive and interesting alike to officers and men.

The musketry course is being amended, and for this year an alternative course of a more practical nature will be allowed to take the place of the volley and independent firing. It will include firing at long ranges at head-and-shoulder targets, &c. An extra allowance of fifty rounds a man will be allowed for field firing. Unfortunately, owing to many corps possessing ranges of only a limited length, it will not be possible at present to make this practical course obligatory; but this I trust will be remedied in the future.

ENGINEER CORPS.

Engineer corps now exist in all four centres, and stores have been ordered from England to complete their equipment. The corps in Dunedin and Christchurch have been established for some years. The one in Auckland has been now in existence rather over two years, and the Wellington corps only started this year. All corps of this branch take a most intelligent interest in their work. A non-commissioned officer from the School of Instruction of Military Engineering is now attached to our School of Instruction in Wellington, and during the summer months he will be able to visit the several districts and instruct the corps in military engineering.

CYCLE CORPS.

The establishment of cycle corps in the four centres is now complete. We obtained a supply of rifle-clips from England, and these have been issued to corps with satisfactory results. As the magazine rifle with which our troops are being armed has a short bayonet, there will be no necessity for the arms of these corps to differ in any way from those about to be issued to the forces.

MEDICAL SERVICE.

During the past year regulations have been framed dealing with the medical branch of the Volunteer Forces. All officers are now appointed to the General Medical List, and are

only attached to corps in an honorary capacity. They can now earn capitation by attending a certain number of Government parades, and giving instruction in ambulance work to the corps to which they are attached. Provision is also made for medical officers who do not attend at least two Easter camps in three years being struck off the list of medical officers. An equipment consisting of a field ambulance, medical panniers, haversacks, stretchers, &c., has been ordered for the equipment of each bearer corps at the centres. The strength of the bearer corps has been doubled in each centre, and a corps has been formed with its headquarters at Nelson.

During the past year Volunteer medical officers have rendered great assistance in the medical examination of the men who went to South Africa. All invalids returning to the colony from active service have been examined by Medical Boards.

I hope that with improved equipment and a better organization the Volunteer medical service will be of much benefit to the colony.

CADET CORPS.

A great feature of the military display during the recent Royal visit to the colonies were the Cadet Corps of the different States. In this colony, all the cadets were called out with the adult corps, and took part in lining the streets in the reviews at Auckland and at Christchurch, and also took some of the guards of honour. At the Christchurch Review we had 2,980 cadets on parade, and they compared very favourably with any cadets I have seen in Australia. His Royal Highness was very pleased with the appearance and turn-out of the Cadet Corps.

Provision is made in the Defence Act for the formation, equipment, and training of cadet corps in connection with public schools. I understand it is intended to place the control of the cadet corps belonging to the primary schools under the Education Board, whilst those of the secondary schools remain under the Commandant. No regulations in this respect, however, have been drawn up.

Provision is also made for the formation, &c., of cadet corps composed of youths over fourteen years of age not belonging to public schools, and this I consider a most excellent movement. Some corps of this description have already been accepted, and boys join them between the time they leave school and the age at which they can join the adult corps, and get military training and discipline when it is most needed by them.

RIFLE CLUBS.

The amendments of "The Defence Act, 1886," permitted rifle clubs being accepted as part of the defence forces of the colony. Regulations have been drawn out governing the formation of rifle clubs, and up to date twelve rifle clubs have been accepted. It is too early yet to report as to whether this movement will turn out successful, as we have only just commenced accepting the services of the clubs.

I would urge on the captains of clubs the necessity of practising their men at unknown ranges, and at almost invisible targets, and the great necessity there is for men being exercised as often as possible in judging distances. It is not sufficient to train a man so that he should be able to put on bull's-eye after bull's-eye at a known range and at a large standing target, but he should be trained, as far as possible, in work similar to that he would be likely to be called on to undertake in war-time.

Provision is made in the regulations for members to attend a certain number of drills annually. Rifle clubs will be scattered all over the colony, in places remote from headquarters of districts, and it would be a great tax on our present small staff of drill-instructors if they have to go round once a quarter to instruct rifle clubs. If the regulations are properly carried out, and the colony is to get the full value out of the rifle clubs, a considerable increase will have to be made to the instructional staff. One or two officers will also have to be appointed to take charge of the work connected with the clubs, and undertake their annual inspection.

NEW ZEALAND RIFLE ASSOCIATION.

The annual meeting was held at Wanganui this year, but I have not been informed if the Association is to be continued in the future. I have recommended that the Government should take over the affairs of the Association, and manage the meeting for the benefit of the defence forces. We have an excellent range now at Trentham, where a meeting could be held; and I strongly urge that the Government should take up and extend the work of the Association.

CAMPS.

Owing to the many occasions on which the Volunteers had been called out during the year, and with a view of getting together a good muster of Volunteers for the Royal visit, it was deemed advisable not to hold Easter camps this year. Permission was given for small camps to be held throughout the colony, which only a few corps availed themselves of. The usual battalion and company camps were held throughout the colony, and these may be looked upon as the most valuable part of the Volunteers' annual training.

UNIFORMS.

A national uniform has now been approved for the colony, and all new companies accepted have to provide themselves with this uniform; whilst old corps, when their uniforms require renewing, will be expected to furnish themselves with the approved pattern. The uniform is neat and workmanlike, and is the same in which our men were clothed when detachments were sent to Sydney and Melbourne. One of the recommendations of the Joint Defence Committee was that the Government should supply the whole of the Volunteer Force with overcoats and waterproof sheets. I made a recommendation that the Government should obtain from England a supply of

overcoats which could have been landed in the colony at a cost of under 18s. apiece. These overcoats were new coats of the pattern formerly worn in the Imperial service. This pattern of overcoat had recently been changed, and replaced by one covering the valise equipment of the infantry soldier. My recommendation, so far, has not been entertained, as it was deemed advisable to make an effort to obtain the coats in the colony. £5,000 was passed on last year's estimates for the provision of overcoats; but I understand that so far, beyond a few patterns, no overcoats have been obtained, and that the tenders for the supply of overcoats in the colony are not due till the end of this month.

The amount of £750 was also sanctioned for waterproof sheets. As far as I can ascertain 800 of these have been ordered and supplied at a cost of £160, and no more are now on order.

STAFF AND ORGANIZATION.

I had great hopes that the Government would act on the recommendation of the Joint Defence Committee, and at last sanction a definite and satisfactory staff organization both for headquarters and districts. It must be remembered that the strength of the forces has been very considerably increased during the last two years, that the troops are scattered over a very large area of country, and consequently the work of administration is very heavy.

Provision was made on the estimates last year for the appointment of two officers, one as A.A.G. (A) and one as A.A.G. (B). These officers were to take charge of the two military branches of administration and supply, and each district was also to have two officers, one as Adjutant, and one as D.A.A.G. (B) who would practically carry out similar work in the districts. I have repeatedly urged that these appointments should be made to enable me to put the organization and administration on a satisfactory footing before handing over command to my successor. Lieut.-Colonel Newall, C.B., on his return from South Africa was appointed temporarily to act as A.A.G. (B) from 1st March, and took up his duties for a few days in my office, but on Lieut.-Colonel Porter proceeding to Africa, the former officer was put in temporary command of the Wellington District, and has remained in that position ever since. The difficulty of appointing the staff lies in the fact that a promise has been given that, as far as possible, appointments should be given to officers who have served in Africa. This is an excellent idea as far as it goes, but it should be borne in mind that there are officers in the colony who have done long and faithful service, and are in every way deserving of promotion, and it is very hard on them that their claims should be altogether set aside.

No appointments of D.A.A.G. (B) for districts have yet been made. I called on District Commandants to forward the names of officers who had served in Africa who were willing to take these appointments; only one name was submitted, and that officer has not received an appointment.

Major Madocks has left the colony, and I have neither an artillery nor an engineer officer on the headquarters staff. As the artillery and submarine-mining work is very technical, it is essential that the new Commandant should have officers from these branches of the service to assist him. Under the provision of the Defence Act Amendment Bill, the Commandant is responsible for the construction, maintenance, &c., of all fortifications, works, buildings, &c., belonging to the military authorities of the colony. Under present arrangements all construction-work is carried out by the Public Works Department, plans of fortifications, &c., are all prepared by that department, and after a plan has once been submitted to the Commandant, and been passed by him, he has nothing more to do with the work until it is completed and handed over to the military authorities. The fortification-work itself is, with very few exceptions, carried out by prison labour, and this is a slow and most unsatisfactory arrangement. All the alterations that have been made in the Wellington defence-works during my five years as Commandant, could have easily been done by free labour in under two years, and at the present time the work is not completed.

The Defence Act Amendment Act of last session provided that the Minister of Defence might place under the control of the Commandant the care and distribution of military munitions of war. The estimates provided for the erection of mobilisation stores in each centre, and the maintenance of a sufficient staff, but, so far, no change has been made in the very faulty organization which has existed for so long, and which I sincerely hoped the legislation of last session would have killed. A mobilisation store is in course of erection at Christchurch, the money for one has been sanctioned at Wellington, and also for one at Dunedin. Plans for the store at Wellington were submitted to me a few days ago. We have so far failed to get a site for the store in Dunedin. I do not think there is any necessity to build a store at Auckland, as when the merchants' explosives are removed from the present magazine buildings to the Auckland Harbour Board's hulk, these magazines will be available for storage purposes.

I feel it my duty to very strongly bring to notice the wrong system we are perpetuating in the colony of centralising all the work. Neither the Commandant nor the Officers Commanding Districts have anything like the discretionary power they should have. Small details of expenditure have to be submitted by Commanding Officers to the Commandant, and by him to the Defence Minister, correspondence is increased, time is wasted, and no ultimate good is effected. The system in the colony is infinitely worse than anything I know of in any part of the Empire, and one great lesson learnt by the Imperial authorities from the present war is decentralisation and delegation of authority to officers who are intrusted with important commands.

A separation has been made between the civil and military portions of the Defence Office, and the Commandant now has an office establishment of his own. As the Civil portion of the office retained all but one of the clerks that had been accustomed to military work, the Commandant's office started rather heavily handicapped, added to which two moves of habitation in six months, and a third in prospect, have not much helped matters; but everything is working well at present.

A very large amount of clerical work is entailed on account of contingent men who have returned to the colony and those still in the field.

I regret that owing to the many interruptions to my time this year I have been able to carry out very few inspections, but during the time of the Royal visit I saw, in one way or other, practically the whole Force of the colony. With the large Force there is now in existence in the colony, and the scattered situations of many of the country corps, it will be impossible for the commandant annually to inspect all the corps and attend also to the work of administration. This will also apply, in a minor degree, to the District Commanding Officers. In the Wellington District alone there are now almost as many Volunteers as there were in the whole colony when I assumed command. When rifle clubs are added to the strength of districts I do not see how the Commanding Officers can thoroughly carry out their administrative and inspection work without further assistance.

For the responsibility and the work they carry out, the District Commandants are about the worst paid military men I know. I have frequently tried to get an improvement made in their pay, but only in one case has the pay been raised during my stay in the colony, and that was on the grounds of the officer performing the duties of President of the Central Board of Examination in addition to his own duties.

SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION.

I am glad to say that at last a School of Instruction has been established in the colony. I have urged this course on the Government for such a long time that it is a satisfaction to me to find it an accomplished fact. Major Owen has been appointed Commandant of the school, and there are two permanent non-commissioned officers attached to the school—one from the School of Musketry at Hythe, and one from the School of Military Engineering at Chatham.

I have already pointed out in this report the urgent necessity for a better military education of our officers and men, and the establishment of this school provides for any officers or non-commissioned officers who are willing being allowed to go through a course of military instruction. Both officers and non-commissioned officers receive pay whilst undergoing instruction, and the non-commissioned officers will be accommodated in barracks.

ARMS AND EQUIPMENT.

A sufficient supply of .303 magazine arms has been ordered from England to equip the whole of our forces and maintain a small reserve. We have now sufficient arms to equip all the corps in the North Island, and this work is now being carried out. We have also commenced arming the Canterbury and Nelson Districts with magazine rifles. Before leaving the colony I hope the whole of the defence forces will have magazine arms.

Unfortunately, the latest supply of arms sent out have been sent without bayonets, but this is a matter that can be very easily remedied. The .303 Martini-Enfields with which the majority of the troops have been armed up to the present are being called in, and these arms will be available for sale to the Government rifle-clubs. A large proportion of these arms have been found on return to store to be unserviceable, owing to lack of care taken of them by the Volunteers. When smokeless powder is used, it is essential that the rifles should be cleaned out immediately after using, and should have daily attention. The loss, of course, falls on the Volunteers, who have to make good any damage done to their arms, but unless great care is taken we might find a lot of arms unserviceable when they were urgently required. I am strongly of opinion that the Government should erect small brick armouries for storage of the arms, and that in future the Volunteers should not keep their rifles in their own homes. Corps should be called upon to arrange for a caretaker, who might make a small charge for cleaning the arms. A scale of fines might be instituted against the men who did not return their rifles to the armoury within a certain time after having taken them out for shooting. These fines to go towards the payment of the caretaker.

A full equipment of leather accoutrements, water-bottles, and haversacks has not yet been provided for the troops, and this is a matter which should be seen to at once. To actually complete the equipment of existing adult corps we require approximately 1,800 rifle-buckets, 3,100 bandoliers, 2,200 waistbelts, 3,000 frogs, 6,600 pouches, 2,000 slings, 3,700 bottles (water) and straps, 100 haversacks.

AMMUNITION.

We have now entered into an agreement with the Colonial Ammunition Company for the annual supply of two million rounds of small-arm ammunition. The old conditions under which we were bound to obtain all our ammunition from this company no longer exist. Should we want more than two million rounds in any one year, we have to give the company notice of the amount required, and the time it is required in. If they cannot supply within the required time, we can go elsewhere for our supply, allowing the company, however, to send in their tender with that of others. The quality of the .303 ammunition supplied by the company is good, and has given cause for no complaint.

CAMP EQUIPMENT.

We have at present barely more than six hundred serviceable tents in the colony, and a thousand more with fifty marquees are under order. These supplies are not sufficient to meet the requirements of the increased forces of the colony.

DRILL-HALLS.

The sum of £7,000 was placed on the estimates as a pound for pound subsidy for drill-halls, and out of this amount the following subsidies have been granted:—

£ for £ subsidy,				£
£ for £ subsidy,	Dannevirke Volunteers for drill-hall	...	...	600
"	Caversham	"	...	200
"	Temuka	"	...	100
"	Roslyn	"	...	200
"	Hastings	"	...	400
"	Paeroa	"	...	250
"	Ashburton Guards, for orderly-room	...	...	50
"	Port Chalmers drill-shed	...	...	23
"	Auckland for lecture-room	...	...	50
"	up to £100 promised Napier drill-shed on the 21st January, 1901, provided they raise the £100.			

The Auckland drill-hall has recently been burned down, and the local Education Board objected to its being re-erected on the same site. The only suitable site available was on the Auckland Harbour Board's property in Freeman's Bay. A very large majority of the Volunteers wished to retain the old site, and the Education Board have at length agreed to allow us to rebuild on that site. Plans and estimates are being prepared for the new hall and buildings, which will include a district office, gun-sheds, and harness-rooms, and authority has been given to commence clearing the old site so as to be ready to commence building operations as soon as possible.

Neither the Christchurch nor the Wellington Volunteers are willing to come forward with any sum on the basis of the pound for pound subsidy in order to enlarge and repair their halls. The Christchurch hall is in almost a dangerous state, and the Wellington hall is too cramped to accommodate all the troops of the garrison. A large sum should be taken on this year's estimates for the provision of repairs and enlargements to drill-halls throughout the colony.

RIFLE RANGES.

During the past year a range at Trentham has been acquired by the Government for the use of the Wellington Volunteers. It is an excellent range for both long-range small-arm and artillery practice.

A lease has been acquired of a range for the Christchurch Volunteers at Sumner. The range is about to be commenced.

A suitable site for a range for the Auckland Garrison was found quite close to the Penrose Junction Railway-station, and inquiries were made as to the terms on which it could be purchased. Owing, however, to the excessive price asked for the land by the trustees of the estate the Government have declined to purchase, and the Auckland Volunteers are still without a range on which firing can be carried out beyond 600 yds. There is another site for a suitable range within easy access of Auckland, which I recommended some time back should be purchased by the Government, but my proposal was not agreed to. It is imperative that a rifle-range suitable for long-distance and volley firing should be provided for the troops in the Auckland Garrison. Long-distance firing is an essential of modern warfare, and our troops must receive a training in this course of firing to enable them to reap the full benefit of the modern arms with which they are now equipped.

VETERINARY SERVICE.

Now that we have such a large establishment of mounted corps it would be as well to establish a veterinary branch of the Volunteer Force. The Government have now a large number of Veterinary Surgeons in the colony, and I have no doubt that many of these gentlemen would join the Volunteer Force if an opportunity were given them for doing so. They would be placed on a general list of Veterinary Officers, and detailed for duty when mounted battalions went into camp. During the time when horses were being bought for South Africa the veterinary department rendered the greatest assistance, and the number of horses examined by the veterinary surgeons was very large. They gave their services freely and ungrudgingly, and, I understand, have so far received no recognition or reward from the Government for the amount of extra work they performed. It would be a kindly action if some recognition were made of their services.

CONCLUSION.

I can say with pleasure that I leave the defence forces of the colony in a condition much better fitted to take the field than when I entered upon my command. During my term of office the defences have been strengthened and the strength of the forces has been raised to a number amply adequate for the defence of the colony. They will shortly all be armed with modern magazine rifles, and are better equipped, trained, and organized than they were five years ago.

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

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