

1903.

NEW ZEALAND.

## DEFENCE FORCES OF NEW ZEALAND

(REPORT ON THE), BY MAJOR-GENERAL J. M. BABINGTON, COMMANDANT OF THE FORCES.

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

SIR,—

1st August, 1903.

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.

I have now completed the inspection of one hundred and sixty-seven corps, &c., in the colony, and I hope shortly to visit the remaining few. In some cases but small musters were obtained, the men representing that they could not obtain leave from their employers to attend. While endeavouring as far as possible to suit the convenience of corps as regards dates and hours of inspection, it is obvious this cannot always be done; if it were, the number of inspections during the year would be extremely few. Legislation should be applied to give the Commandant the call of all members of a corps once a year.

The Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Contingents returned to the colony from service in South Africa. The Coronation Contingent also returned in 1902. In England this contingent received many marks of hospitality and good-will. There was evidence that a better system for the constituting of contingents for active service should be looked for in the future, and it is hoped such will be done in the case of contingents proceeding again from these shores.

The progress made on the defence works during the past year is unsatisfactory. Prison labour has been repeatedly condemned on this account by former Commandants, and I entirely indorse their opinion.

The new offices for the Commandant and staff are still far from completion; little work has been done during the past year. The present offices have been repeatedly condemned on sanitary grounds, and the clerks have suffered somewhat in health. I trust this work may be pushed on.

## STAFF AND ORGANIZATION.

I regret that, with the exception of an application having been made for the services of an officer of the Royal Engineers, none of the recommendations submitted by me, and referred to in my annual report of last year, have been given effect to. In the matter of staff, too, the Districts of Auckland, Otago, and Canterbury are in a less efficient state than they were in 1902. Staff officers are as essential in military affairs as the various responsible persons in any large business. It takes time to train them, and it is too late to do so when war comes. The cost to the country would be very small, and if economy has to be effected it should be carried out in matters less vital to efficiency.

The Sub-districts of South Canterbury and Invercargill have been abolished. They served little purpose but to increase work and expense, and no extra efficiency was obtained by their retention.

I regret it has apparently not been possible to consider my recommendations regarding coast defences.

The mine-fields proposed and commenced at Port Chalmers and Lyttelton have, with the approval of His Excellency the Admiral lately commanding the Australian Station, been abandoned. A very large saving of public money has been effected by this. Considerable economies, too—approximately £7,000 per annum—without loss of efficiency, have also been effected in the matters of *personnel*, extraneous services, clerical staff, &c.

The estimates for defence amounted last year to £329,864. Expense incurred by the South African contingents doubtless did something to swell the amount under this heading. How much of the £329,864 estimated for last year was expended I am not in a position to say.

## PERMANENT FORCE.

The Permanent Force is divided into two branches—Artillery and Engineers. His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to allow the prefix "Royal" to be assumed, and they are now known as Royal New Zealand Artillery and Royal New Zealand Engineers.