

1904.

NEW ZEALAND.

DEFENCE FORCES OF NEW ZEALAND

(REPORT OF 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, 1904.

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

The musters obtained at inspections during the past year have varied considerably, but, with the exception of some of the mounted corps, have been on the whole satisfactory. I still hold to the opinion expressed in last year's report that on the occasion of the Commandant's inspection no obstacles should be allowed to exist to prevent all officers and men being present.

The progress made in defence-works during the past year has been again unsatisfactory. The employment of prison labour is the direct cause of this.

STAFF AND ORGANIZATION.

An officer of the Royal Engineers (Captain Robinson) arrived from England in November last. Economy and increased efficiency will result from this officer's addition to the staff. Beyond this no improvement in the unsatisfactory state of the Defence Forces of the colony, as regards staff and organization, has been effected. I refer in another portion of this report to this most important matter.

NEW ZEALAND PERMANENT FORCE.

The training, efficiency, and conduct of the forces during the past year have been up to the high standard of past years.

The authorised establishment is always maintained, and there is no difficulty in recruiting; on the contrary, applications for enlistment are being received every week, and names are continually being placed on the lists of candidates for both branches. Several of the non-commissioned officers and rank and file are too old, and should be retired.

Lieutenant F. Symon returned from England in October, 1903, and assumed command of the R.N.Z.E. and control of submarine mining. This officer, during his stay in England, underwent courses of instruction in submarine mining and other branches of engineering. Lieutenant R. B. Smythe left for England in November, 1903, to undergo a course of instruction in submarine mining. Lieutenants E. B. Mickle and R. O. Chesney, R.N.Z.A., have been employed as District Adjutants in the Otago and Auckland District Offices respectively. Although these officers have done their best, it is an unsatisfactory arrangement in every way, and acts detrimentally in the matter of such officers' regimental training. The latter officer has lately returned to regimental duty, and is about to proceed to England to undergo the gunnery-staff course at Woolwich and Shoeburyness.

The work performed by the Permanent Force generally has been the same as in previous years—i.e., artillery and submarine-mining duties, annual courses of instruction, and instruction of Volunteers. Every opportunity is given to non-commissioned officers and men of the R.N.Z.E. on detachment in Lyttelton and Dunedin to transfer to Wellington or Auckland in order to keep themselves up to date in their work. The number of men employed as sentries over prisoners, mentioned in the 1903 report, has been reduced, but there are still many non-commissioned officers and men performing clerical duties and employed as orderlies who can ill be spared. If the establishment is not increased, a clerical section, supernumerary to establishment, should be formed.

The workshop for the regimental artificers at Mount Cook, Wellington, has been put in hand. The workshop at Shelly Bay has been rearranged and improved during the past year, with the result that much expense is already saved owing to the amount of repairs, &c., which are now being executed on the spot. It will be possible to perform more work still when the new lathe now on order is received in the colony. The stables at Mount Cook are in an unsatisfactory condition, and new stables should be built.

The R.N.Z.E. suffer much in their work from the lack of the necessary buildings. Those in existence are very badly sited, and the present arrangement of them is unsatisfactory as regards an efficient minefield defence.

VOLUNTEERS.

The strength of the Volunteer Force (inclusive of Defence Cadets and Defence Rifle Clubs) on the 1st of August was distributed as follows:—

Auckland (Officers and Men).

1 battery of field artillery	...	...	...	...	90
3 companies garrison artillery	...	...	...	...	256
2 companies engineers	...	...	...	...	167
4 battalions mounted rifles (in all, 20 companies)	...	...	...	...	1,182
2 battalions infantry (in all, 19 companies)	...	...	...	...	998
1 bearer corps	...	...	...	...	32
5 defence cadet corps	...	...	...	...	241
19 defence rifle clubs	...	...	...	...	380
1 garrison band	...	...	...	...	27

Wellington (Officers and Men).

1 battery of field artillery	...	...	...	...	78
2 companies garrison artillery	...	...	...	...	224
2 companies engineers	...	...	...	...	131
4 battalions mounted rifles (in all, 22 companies)	...	...	...	...	1,166
5 battalions infantry (in all, 40 companies)	...	...	...	...	2,146
1 bearer corps	...	...	...	...	31
24 defence cadet corps	...	...	...	...	1,164
49 defence rifle clubs	...	...	...	...	1,303
1 garrison band	...	...	...	...	27

Canterbury (Officers and Men).

1 battery of field artillery	...	...	...	...	70
2 companies of garrison artillery	...	...	...	...	178
1 company engineers	...	...	...	...	74
3 battalions mounted rifles (in all, 14 companies)	...	...	...	...	739
3 battalions infantry (in all, 21 companies)	...	...	...	...	1,124
1 bearer corps	...	...	...	...	37
7 defence cadet corps	...	...	...	...	422
7 defence rifle clubs	...	...	...	...	185
1 garrison band	...	...	...	...	26

Otago (Officers and Men).

1 battery of field artillery	...	...	...	...	57
2 companies garrison artillery	...	...	...	...	226
1 company engineers	...	...	...	...	89
2 battalions mounted rifles (in all, 13 companies)	...	...	...	...	835
4 battalions infantry (in all, 33 companies)	...	...	...	...	1,878
1 bearer corps	...	...	...	...	33
13 defence cadet corps	...	...	...	...	732
13 defence rifle clubs	...	...	...	...	299
1 garrison band	...	...	...	...	28

Nelson (Officers and Men).

2 batteries of field artillery	...	...	...	...	109
1 battalion mounted rifles (in all, 4 companies)	...	...	...	...	257
2 battalions infantry (in all, 11 companies)	...	...	...	...	673
1 bearer corps	...	...	...	...	46
7 defence cadet corps	...	...	...	...	328
12 defence rifle clubs	...	...	...	...	375
1 garrison band	...	...	...	...	27

Summary (Officers and Men).

6 batteries of field artillery	...	...	...	...	404
9 companies of garrison artillery	...	...	...	...	884
6 companies of engineers	...	...	...	...	461
14 battalions of mounted rifles (in all, 73 companies)	...	...	...	...	4,179
16 battalions of infantry (in all, 124 companies)	...	...	...	...	6,819
5 bearer corps	...	...	...	...	179
56 defence cadet corps	...	...	...	...	2,887
100 defence rifle clubs	...	...	...	...	2,542
5 garrison bands	...	...	...	...	135

Total 18,490

MOUNTED CORPS.

An improvement has taken place as regards the efficiency of mounted corps. It is now recognised by corps that dismounted duties, and not mounted drill, is the important part of their training. As regards men, the material is excellent, and with training it would be very hard to equal

them. Corps are on the whole fairly well mounted; the saddlery, however, is in many instances unserviceable. Nosebags have not yet been provided. The service rifle lately adopted by the British army, and which is now being procured to replace deficiencies, is being issued in the first instance to the mounted corps.

FIELD ARTILLERY VOLUNTEERS.

The 9-pr. R.B.L. guns have all been withdrawn from the field batteries, but H Battery at Nelson and I Battery at Westport (lately converted to field artillery from being No. 10 Company, Garrison Artillery) are both still armed with 6-pr. Nordenfeldts. I have recommended that these batteries have three 15-pr. B.L. guns each.

The annual practice as carried out by the field artillery this year was good, and the batteries, with one exception, all obtained a high figure of merit and first-class classification.

The maintenance of a small number of horses trained to artillery-work in Wellington has proved so beneficial to the battery stationed there, and at the same time so economical when the saving effected in cartage is considered, that I would again recommend adopting a similar arrangement at other centres.

GARRISON ARTILLERY VOLUNTEERS.

The establishment of many of the companies has been raised during the year in order to meet requirements.

Experiments carried out in Wellington with a view to providing dummy guns for drilling gun detachments in drill-sheds, and moving targets for training D.R.F. detachments and gunlayers both in drill-sheds and in the batteries, have proved successful. Descriptions, drawings, &c., of the various contrivances have been circulated to the other stations, and the same arrangements are being made locally by the Permanent Force artificers at those stations.

The annual practice as carried out by the garrison artillery was good throughout, a high figure of merit having been obtained by nearly all the companies. They all classified as first class.

The concession as regards fort-manning parades by night have been taken advantage of, and good results have been obtained from these parades.

The garrison-artillery corps at Westport, hitherto known as No. 10 Company, G.A.V. (Westport Position Artillery), have recently been transformed into field artillery, and are now called I Battery, F.A.V. The change was considered advisable having regard to the work it may be called upon to perform.

ENGINEER CORPS.

There are four field-engineer and two submarine-mining Volunteer companies in the colony. The field-engineering companies have in the past suffered very much from want of an instructor. Now that an officer of the Royal Engineers is available efficiency will naturally increase.

It has been recommended—(1.) That the companies be increased in strength to 100, divided into a field-engineering section of 50 men, a telegraph section of 25, and a signalling section of 25. (2.) That "siege-works," railways, and telegraphs (theory only) should be removed from the syllabus of the field-engineering section and "hasty demolitions" introduced, the subjects of the telegraph and signalling sections remaining as at present. (3.) That the various companies should go into camp at such times as to allow a trained instructor being present throughout the training of each company. (4.) That the theoretical examination mentioned in the *New Zealand Gazette*, 18th June, 1903, should be done away with, and a *viva voce* examination at the termination of the camp substituted.

The present equipment scale has been revised, and stores should be supplied to render the companies efficient.

The work done by companies is satisfactory, as far as it goes, and all ranks are anxious to become efficient.

INFANTRY.

With the dismounted corps, as with the mounted ones, an improvement in training has taken place. The system introduced of each rank being held to possess more knowledge than the rank below it, and the non-commissioned officers and junior ranks having responsibility thrown on them, is having the desired effect. More outdoor work is, however, required, and every opportunity should be taken to training corps as far as possible in daylight, and away from the drill-halls; the summer mornings and evenings should be taken full advantage of. Infantry corps should be provided with entrenching-tools.

The physique of some of the infantry corps is not as generally satisfactory as it should be. It is to be hoped that improvement in this matter, to which attention has been called, may where required be effected.

CYCLE CORPS.

There are five cycle corps in the colony. While recognising the useful rôle each corps can play where good roads exist, I do not advise, having in view the operations likely to take place in New Zealand, any addition to the present numbers of these.

MEDICAL CORPS.

But little advance has been possible in the matter of establishing an organized medical corps in New Zealand. It is to be regretted such is the case, as the medical corps is also one which is absolutely essential in war. Its organization and training cannot be effected at short notice.

VETERINARY CORPS.

Owing to the new regulations not yet having been approved, no advance towards the establishment of a veterinary corps has been effected. It is important that such a corps should exist, and it is hoped that its establishment may not be much longer delayed.

CADET CORPS.

There are now fifty-six cadet corps under the Defence Department in the colony. During the last year thirteen new corps have been accepted. The efficiency and discipline of cadet corps on the whole is satisfactory. All are now armed with the Lee-Enfield or Martini-Enfield carbine; their equipment, however, is incomplete. Haversacks should be an issue to cadet corps.

No increase of free ammunition to cadet corps, as recommended, has been sanctioned; the present allowance is too small, and should be doubled.

As stated in my report for 1903, I would desire to see the cadet movement very much more developed; the training imparted cannot but be of national value. I have ever since my arrival in the colony expressed the conviction that every English-speaking boy throughout the Empire should be trained as a cadet. Men who have been so trained are better fitted both morally and physically for civil life, as well as for military employment should they be required.

RIFLE CLUBS.

There are one hundred rifle clubs in the colony. Beyond shooting, rifle-club men receive no training for war. Officers commanding districts have no time to devote to the superintendence of rifle clubs, and, unless the requisite district staff is provided, the only alternative I can suggest to in any way amend the unsatisfactory state of affairs would be to appoint an officer specially to superintend rifle clubs. Unless the obligations of rifle clubs are very much more extended I cannot, however, represent them as being an efficient integral part of the Defence Forces.

NEW ZEALAND DEFENCE FORCES RIFLE ASSOCIATION.

A successful meeting was held at Trentham on the 3rd March, 1904, and following days. The total number of entries was 335, and the large number of young shots that came forward was very satisfactory. An advance was made in the matter of making competition more under service conditions than in previous years, and it is hoped still further advances in this direction will take place.

A team sailed for England on the 20th April, 1904, to take part in the Bisley competition, and from the reports received has won the Kolapore Cup, and has otherwise rendered a very satisfactory account of itself.

CAMPS AND CAMP EQUIPMENT.

Camps were held in the vicinity of Nelson and Auckland last Easter. The necessity for these was evident, and much useful instruction was gained by those who attended. Even with the small numbers concentrated, the lack of trained staff was severely felt. If such can occur in peace, it is not difficult to foresee what would happen in war. Such concentrations are most valuable, and should be carried out each year in all districts. Approval or otherwise for the same should be notified not later than the 1st January of each year. The amount to be expended in each district should be notified; the Officers Commanding Districts having control of the same to expend to the best advantage. By this means a very large amount of unnecessary correspondence and work would be saved, and they would receive some of that training in the control of expenditure which is so necessary. In a short time, too, I have little doubt that, as has happened elsewhere, real economy would be effected.

The present system under which the annual training-camps are held is not altogether satisfactory, and where corps only go into camp for evening and morning work full value for the money expended on them is not obtained. It is hoped that by next year a more satisfactory scheme, which is now under consideration, may have been inaugurated.

ARMS, EQUIPMENT, AND CLOTHING.

The establishment of a reserve of rifles has been effected, and it is hoped that this reserve will shortly be augmented to meet all requirements.

The completion of the equipment of corps is proceeding, but owing to one cause and another is still far from completion. A new bandolier equipment to replace the unserviceable pouch equipment has been approved, and is being issued by degrees. I would again bring to notice the fact that greatcoats and waterproof sheets are necessary articles of equipment.

SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION.

During the year 1903-4 396 candidates received partial instruction, and out of these 236 completed a full course at the School of Instruction.

The result of the year's work is satisfactory, and even where candidates have only been able to attend a part of a course they have learnt something of advantage to the service.

The attendance of senior battalion officers is not satisfactory, the consequence being that they are in many cases unacquainted with the best methods of instruction, and systematic teaching of the lower ranks is in such cases not understood or carried out.

The system of examination has been changed. Instead of separate examination for officers and non-commissioned officers being held on the completion of each course, candidates are now examined by the Central Board of Examination test for promotion, which is held quarterly.

The School of Instruction is an institution that is of much benefit to the Volunteer Force. The more opportunities for receiving instruction that can be placed within the reach of officers and non-commissioned officers, the more efficient corps, &c., must become. It would be advantageous were the sphere of the School of Instruction enlarged so as to embrace that teaching in the work that should be performed by officers on the staff in peace and which would have to be carried out by them in time of war.

SIGNALLING.

My recommendations that signalling equipment be provided have not yet been approved. A few corps have purchased privately a moderate amount of signalling equipment, but the resources in this very important matter are totally inadequate. At such manœuvres as have taken place the want of trained signallers has been invariably felt. The transmission of orders, &c., in the absence of signallers, in most cases is a matter of hours instead of minutes, and in some cases is altogether impossible. The results that would ensue on service are not difficult to foresee.

ARMY SERVICE CORPS.

It was hoped that, at any rate, the nucleus of a company at each district headquarters, trained to the duties of supply and transport in the field, might have been formed; but under present conditions this has been found to be impracticable. A force cannot live without food, nor can it be fed without systematic arrangements for so doing being completed in time of peace. We cannot, too, expect the enemy to attack any particular positions that might be laid down in a scheme of defence, and mobility must be provided for, which would increase the difficulties of supply.

DRILL-HALLS AND RIFLE RANGES.

There has been no material change in the situation as regards drill-halls and rifle ranges during the past twelve months.

The ground for Penrose Rifle Range at Auckland has been acquired, and the range is now in process of construction. The ground for a new rifle range at Wanganui has also been taken; the ground on which the old range was situated has been sold. The Sumner Range at Christchurch is at present closed owing to a question of safety; it is anticipated, however, the matter will soon be settled. Improvement is being effected in the range at Pelichet Bay, Dunedin.

As regards drill-halls, amounts have been placed on this year's estimates for the erection of drill-halls at Christchurch, Oamaru, and Nelson. Minor extensions and improvements in the drill-halls existing at several of the volunteering centres have been carried out. In order to obtain the necessary drill-hall and mobilisation-store accommodation at Dunedin, application was made by the trustees of the present buildings to sell, these buildings being unsuitable. It was found, however, on reference to the trust deed, a special Act had to be passed before this could be done, which will, I hope, be presented to Parliament this year, and, if passed, new and suitable buildings will be erected; they are much required.

AMMUNITION.

The position of the colony as regards ammunition has most materially improved since last year.

The establishment of a satisfactory reserve of small-arm and of ordnance ammunition has now been practically effected. The quality of the small-arm ammunition supplied by the Colonial Ammunition Company continues on the whole to be satisfactory; its price, however, remains unreduced.

Ever since my arrival in New Zealand I have, as is clearly indicated in my reports, endeavoured to obtain that reorganization of the Defence Force which would render it efficient. There is no organized staff in the colony, and those departments which are absolutely necessary for the training of a force in peace, and its guidance and maintenance in war, do not exist. Whilst staff and organization is on all hands admitted necessary for the establishment of any sound business, it appears to be in New Zealand considered superfluous in that department on which the responsibility for the proper training of the Defence Forces should fall in time of peace, and on which in time of war the safety of the country must in a large measure depend. In all countries where national military requirements have been fully appreciated and carried out, the immense importance of the logical and efficient organization of the staff has been fully recognised. As regards the various departments necessary, it is obvious that, unless such departments as those of the Supply and Transport, Ordnance, Medical, &c., are established and trained in peace-time, no force can take the field. If a Defence Force in New Zealand is to be maintained, it should be efficient; and this could be effected at a less cost than that with which the present one is supported.

As regards the Department of the Under-Secretary for Defence, I have recommended that this should be placed under the Commandant. As regards the charge of stores and equipment, these in time of war would of necessity come under the control of the Commandant, and should be so in time of peace. The present constitution as regards financial matters, too, does not conduce to true economy in peace, and would directly promote waste in war. The theory that all military officers are, by the fact of wearing uniforms, shorn of all business instincts has inevitably tended to produce the laxity which it is supposed to prevent. There can be no doubt that in proportion as officers are accustomed to official responsibility the economy which they alone can secure will be effected.

Looking beyond the deficiencies in staff and organization which have already been referred to, centralisation is another of the serious disabilities attached to the Defence Forces of the colony. The only results of an inordinately centralised system has always been, and must remain, the destruction of initiative. It is also very detrimental to discipline, for unless officers in authority are allowed to assume their proper positions the respect due to these positions cannot be looked for by those serving under them. If a force is to be trained to exercise that initiative and independence of judgment which are essential in the field, its peace administration must be effectively decentralised; the object should be to encourage the assumption of responsibility as far as possible.

I referred in my last year's report to the system of election of officers by corps, which still prevails. I trust the Bill, which was formulated last session, dealing with this matter will during

the present session receive consideration. The disabilities connected with the system still continue to very detrimentally affect the Volunteer Forces.

I have recommended that the term of enlistment for Volunteers be for one year, as formerly, instead of for three years as is at present the case, and this has been approved. Many men do not like to bind themselves for a three years' engagement, and their services are thus lost to the country. Although one year's service cannot render a man efficient, it is better than no training at all, and the majority of the men worth keeping would continue to serve beyond that period.

Volunteer regulations, which I reported last year, have been rewritten, but have not yet been approved of, and the want of them is seriously felt.

The terms for earning capitation referred to in last year's report have worked well, and the concessions which were granted have proved of value. The battalion system has been recommended for cadets, and it is hoped will be shortly introduced.

The frequent inspections by Officers Commanding Districts which have taken place have been of good effect. Were the required staff, however, in existence, better results both as regards training and discipline would be arrived at.

The officers' clubs continue to have a most beneficial effect.

An excellent spirit pervades all ranks of the Defence Force.

I have, so far as is possible, pointed out what I consider the shortcomings of the Defence Force of the colony. Recent events in the East and the Imperial interests in the Pacific demand attention to the position as regards defence that this colony occupies. Beyond this, too, sooner or later, the existence of a force to defend Imperial interests in Australasia must be imperative; and for every reason any such force as now exists should be organized on sound principles.

J. M. BABINGTON, Major-General,
Commandant of New Zealand Defence Forces.

The Hon. the Minister of Defence.

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