

1873.

NEW ZEALAND.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON COLONIAL DEFENCE.

Report brought up 24th September, 1873, and ordered to be printed.

THE Committee having carefully considered the matters remitted to them, are of opinion,—

1. That the only plan of external defence likely to prove efficient is a carefully devised system of Torpedoes and heavy Batteries.

2. That for the purposes of internal defence the existing Militia and Volunteer system requires to be reorganized, in order to ensure efficient service in the field.

3. That a fixed percentage of the population should be properly disciplined and trained to arms, as the nucleus of a defence force when required, and that where practicable the drill should be for a certain number of days continuously.

4. That the suggestions of the Sub-Committee, as embodied in their Report appended hereto, be referred to the Government for their consideration, to be adopted in so far as consistent with the foregoing principles; and it is recommended that every corps should be placed under canvas once a year if possible.

5. That the capitation grant in no case should be less than £3, and should be increased according to circumstances, and the position of the corps, the frontier corps requiring a larger allowance.

6. That a Bill be prepared as early as possible during the recess, and circulated previous to the next Session of Parliament.

JOHN BATHGATE,
Chairman.

REPORT OF SUB-COMMITTEE.

THE Sub-Committee appointed to consider the proposed new Volunteer Act, and Regulations thereto appended, have the honor to report:—

1. That in view of the fact that there is little or no probability of the Act passing into law this Session, and that consequently there will be ample time to prepare a Bill for the next Session of Parliament, differing in some of its features from that referred to their consideration, they have not thought it advisable to go through the said Bill clause by clause, with a view to propose specific amendments, or verbal alterations.

2. The Sub-Committee approve of the proposal which the Bill contains to enable the framing of regulations to suit the special circumstances and requirements of the Force in particular districts, and provided that this feature is maintained in any Bill for the better regulation of the Force brought before Parliament, the Sub-Committee think that the regulations issued as model regulations need not be so carefully scrutinized as otherwise would be required. The Sub-Committee consider that, as proposed in the Bill, the model regulations should apply in all districts where special regulations duly authorized have not been made, and they think that sufficient safeguard is provided against such model regulations being unsuitable to the circumstances or requirements of any portion of the Force, by the power given to district commands to frame regulations, subject to sanction by the proper authority, to meet their special case. The Sub-Committee have therefore confined themselves to the consideration of certain leading features and principles, which they think should be embodied in any legislation on the subject. They venture to submit for the approval of the Committee the following suggestions, which they have, after careful consideration, decided to recommend for adoption:—

(1.) They are of opinion that it is the duty of every colonist to qualify himself for the defence of the country, and that to this end every possible encouragement should be given to militiamen to volunteer for training. They recommend that more stringent discipline be enforced in the volunteer corps, and that various alterations should be made in the existing regulations.

(2.) The Sub-Committee are of opinion that, if the encouragement offered should prove insufficient to attain the object in view, a modified system of compulsory training should be adopted. They think it desirable that a fixed percentage of the population of the Colony should be required to serve the Volunteer Force, and that in any district, when the number of volunteers does not reach such