

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

proportion, a number of those liable to serve in the First Class Militia should be drawn by lot, and drafted into such volunteer company or companies within the district as the commanding officer of such district shall appoint, or be separately embodied if he shall so think fit; men so drawn to be allowed to find as substitutes men who have not previously undergone training. That the First Class Militia should for this purpose be defined to consist of male persons unmarried, between the ages of seventeen and thirty; men who have served for a period of two years in a volunteer corps not being liable to be drafted or to be called out as Militiamen, except for actual service. In the event of there not being a sufficient number of the First Class Militia, the number required to be drawn from the Second Class.

(3.) The Sub-Committee recommend that volunteers should be enrolled for a period of two years, and at the expiration of that term may be re-enrolled for a further period, not being less than one year. Commanding officers of districts to have power to grant discharges in certain cases.

(4.) When the enrolled strength of any corps falls below the minimum required by the regulations to entitle it to commissioned officers of various grades, the commanding officer of the district should draw the attention of the officer commanding the corps to the fact, and if within three months after receiving such notice the strength of the corps should not be raised to the minimum required, then the commissions of the officer or officers above the rank to which such corps is entitled should lapse.

(5.) The Sub-Committee have perused a carefully written paper laid before them by Mr. F. Stevens, containing several valuable suggestions, which they venture to recommend to the consideration of the Defence Department, more especially as regards the expediency or otherwise of dividing the North Island into three classes of districts; but are of opinion that the classification into town and country districts would meet the object in view, and should extend to both Islands.

(6.) The Sub-Committee think that it is desirable that the question of improving the arms now on issue to the force should be considered, and that as there is reason to believe that battery guns now disused by the Ordnance Department in England could be obtained from the Imperial Government either free or at a nominal cost, it would be advisable that an application should be made to the Home authorities with a view to obtaining the same.

(7.) They also recommend that all the Colonial Forces should be armed with the Snider rifle as quickly as possible, and that the disused arms called in be disposed of without the Colony.

(8.) The Committee further recommend that mounted corps should be armed and drilled as mounted infantry, and that all corps should, where practicable, be instructed in the use of field and siege guns.

(9.) The Sub-Committee are of opinion that arrangements should be made for the efficient inspection of all branches of the service.

CHALLENGE SHIELD.

The Committee further recommend that the Challenge Shield now in possession of the Government, being a work of high art similar in effect to the Elcho Shield, be competed for annually in a Colonial match open to all comers, being efficient volunteers.

CAPITATION.

The Sub-Committee recommend—(1.) That the capitation be made equal for all branches of the service (cadets excepted), viz., £3 per man. (2.) That the number of drills required to entitle to full capitation should be increased to eight inspection and twelve ordinary parades. (3.) That one-third the enrolled strength should count as a parade. (4.) That one-third of the capitation money should be vested in the officer commanding each corps, to be disposed of by the finance committee of the corps, subject to his sanction and concurrence, for general company expenses. (5.) That two shillings and sixpence be paid to each volunteer who has been under arms during an inspection parade, at the conclusion thereof. (6.) That every member qualifying as an efficient, and for whom capitation money is awarded, be paid £1 within one month from the receipt thereof by the officer commanding the corps.

The above regulations to be modified to suit the case of outlying and frontier districts. A smaller number of parades to entitle to the same capitation, and the mode of distribution to be varied as may be deemed expedient.

UNIFORM.

The Sub-Committee are of opinion that it is desirable that there should be uniformity of dress in each branch of the service, and recommend that a fixed Government uniform be adopted for each branch, as follows:—

- Cavalry.—Same uniform as Rifles, except riding breeches.
- Artillery.—Same as Dunedin or Wellington Batteries
- Engineers.—Same as Rifles, with distinguishing badge.
- Rifles.—Grey cloth, cap, tunic, trousers.
- Naval Volunteers.—Same as Port Chalmers Naval.
- Cadets.—Same as branch to which they belong.

No corps enrolled after date of issuance of regulations to be allowed to draw capitation unless clothed in the regulation uniform. Battalions to be allowed distinguishing facings, but the Companies composing each battalion to be distinguished only by the numbers on their caps. Corps already uniformed to be allowed to wear their present uniform and draw capitation for two years subsequently to the issuance of the new regulations, but thereafter to be disqualified to draw capitation money, unless the Government uniform is adopted. To carry out the above, inspecting officers should be required to certify as to whether or not the corps is uniformed as per regulation; and officers commanding corps, in signing their applications for capitation money, should be required to certify as to the uniform of the corps.

W. J. STEWARD,
Chairman.