

Whilst I am always glad that experienced officers, whose advice may be of practical benefit, should be consulted, yet in this matter of the proposed sending of Volunteers to compete as representatives of the New Zealand Defence Forces, the military authorities and not the New Zealand Rifle Association should have been requested to take the matter up.

It is high time for the Government to come to some definite decision in the matter of the future status of the association; and, in my opinion, it would be for the benefit of both the association and the Volunteer Force, more especially if rifle clubs are to be enrolled in the Defence Forces of the colony, for the Government to take over the affairs of the association, and make the encouragement of rifle shooting, as it should be, a matter entirely for the military authorities.

For the last two years the Government, in order to encourage firing under service conditions, gave good prizes for Lloyd Lindsay and field-firing competitions, but the results as regards the number of entries have been most disappointing.

CAMPS.

Battalion and company camps have been held throughout the colony, and the usual combined four-days' camps were held in each district at Easter. These camps were held at the headquarters of each district, for the particular purpose of making all ranks acquainted with some portion of the ground they would have to work over in the case of their being mobilised, and to enable them to carry out some portion of the work they would have to undertake during actual hostilities. The time which the Volunteers can devote to practical work in combined manœuvres is far too short, being really only two days, and it is the only occasion on which a large number of them ever see the different arms of the service working together. I should be glad if some means could be found of bringing them together for a week each year, but the difficulties of doing this appear insurmountable, short of paying each man the amount he would earn at his ordinary employment, for each day he was in camp after Easter Monday.

UNIFORMS.

The question of uniforms is still in an unsatisfactory and unsoldierlike condition, but I am glad to say that the good sense of the Volunteer Force is gradually remedying this state of affairs, and battalions are gradually falling into a uniform style and colour of dress. There are now only two companies in the colony whose uniforms are those of a branch of the service to which they do not belong.

I understand that owing to recent increases in the Forces our stock of buff belts is now used up, and all future supplies will, of course, be of brown leather. So far the experiments of dyeing the buff belts the brown colour of leather has not been a success. A free issue of water-bottles and haversacks has been made to the Force as far as the supplies received from England would permit. About 1,000 more of each will be required, I think, to complete the equipment.

Several corps have provided themselves with greatcoats at their own expense, without any assistance from the Government, but I am still of opinion that this should be a matter of free issue.

STAFF ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION.

There is practically no staff organisation either at headquarters or in the districts. I have several times requested that the duties of the Commander of the Forces should be defined and incorporated in the Defence Act, and have drawn up amendments to the Act on the lines formulated in the Queen's Regulations, which, by paragraph 286, New Zealand Volunteer Regulations, are to be taken as guides in all matters not specifically dealt with in the Defence Act. It is an essential matter that these duties should be defined clearly. The Civil Branch carries out many of the duties which should form part of the work of the Commander of the Forces, and it is impossible for him to be responsible for the efficiency of the Forces, as laid down in the Defence Act, paragraph 5, unless he has full military control.

So far as I am aware there is not any officer in the colony now doing duty with the Permanent Force or the Volunteers who has received any military-staff training, and who would be fitted to take up the duties of a staff officer. In drawing up the defence scheme a full staff had to be included both for headquarters and for each district. The headquarters staff should consist of two Assistant Adjutant-Generals, whose duties should be as laid down in paragraph 224 of the Queen's Regulations. These officers should be appointed from the Colonial Forces, and the training they would receive whilst carrying on their duties would fit them for the command of any of the military districts should a vacancy arise.

Under present circumstances should one of the officers commanding a district vacate his appointment, I do not know where I could find a man with any modern military training to replace him.

The duties of Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General, for discipline, &c., in the districts, should be performed by the officers from the Imperial Forces, who I hope will shortly be appointed and sent out from England, and a colonial officer should be nominated as D.A.A.G. for carrying out the work of the Quartermaster-General's Department. At present the Officers Commanding Districts have not sufficient military control in their commands. They have to apply for most trivial expenditure to headquarters. In the military profession officers should be encouraged to cultivate self-reliance and the taking of definite responsibility, instead of being practically dry-nursed and narrowly limited in their liberty of action.

Each district should have its complement of stores necessary for the number of troops on the strength of the district. Their reserve of ammunition and camp equipment should be complete, and stored at the headquarters of the district, and they should be absolutely under the control of the Officer Commanding the District. As matters are carried on now, should the Forces be suddenly mobilised, there would be endless confusion and unpreparedness.