

1899.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEFENCE FORCES OF NEW ZEALAND

(REPORT ON THE), BY COLONEL A. P. PENTON, R.A., COMMANDER OF THE FORCES.

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

Colonel A. R. PENTON, Commanding New Zealand Forces, to the Hon. the DEFENCE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Defence Office, Wellington, 14th July, 1899.

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

Since the date of forwarding my last annual report a crisis has been passed through, when it seemed that Great Britain was on the point of being involved in a war which would have directly affected all parts of the Empire. The spirit of patriotism which was displayed by the defence forces of this colony was worthy of all praise, and I can confidently assert that had their services been required every man in the Forces would have come forward cheerfully and willingly to do his duty to the Empire. Special attention has been paid in the past year to strengthening the defences of the four principal ports, and to completing their equipment and fighting organization, and I am pleased to be able to report that we are a good deal more advanced now in our power of defence than we were twelve months ago.

PERMANENT FORCE.

No further steps have been taken to increase the number of officers for the Force. Two young officers are in England undergoing training with the Imperial Forces. Two cadets are undergoing training in the colony, one being attached to the Artillery and one to the Submarine-mining branch of the Permanent Force. Provision was made in last year's estimates for the employment of four military cadets, but the two extra cadets thus authorised have not been appointed; and it is a matter for regret that, although the funds have been provided, no further steps have yet been taken to make the appointments, which in course of time should remedy the existing serious deficiency of trained officers. It seems useless to ask for any increase to either branch of the Permanent Force, but I feel it my duty to point out that, although we are increasing our armaments and putting up extra electric searchlight and other installations, we are not increasing the *personnel* of the Force. At Lyttelton, where we have only six non-commissioned officers and men of No. 2 Service Company, they have to take charge of and work the Government launch when it is running, the torpedo-boat, and the whole paraphernalia of an electric searchlight installation. At all the other stations I am short-handed, and have no men I can spare to send to Lyttelton.

My proposals to have the men of both No. 1 and No. 2 Service Companies put on special gradings as regards their qualifications have been approved, and I have submitted to you the conditions on which I consider the change should be carried out. I hope this will have the effect in No. 1 Company of providing Artillery specialists who will keep themselves well up in their work, and in No. 2 Company of enabling us to obtain a supply of tradesmen, such as electricians, engine-drivers, &c., for which at present we have urgent need.

The name of "sapper" has been substituted for that of "gunner" in No. 2 Service Company.

The Government of New South Wales again this year invited the colony to send any officers or non-commissioned officers of No. 1 Company to Sydney to undergo a course of gunnery instruction, lasting for about three months. There is a school of gunnery at Sydney, under the command of an artillery officer from the Imperial service, who has under him a staff of instructors and appliances for giving more thorough and systematic instruction than can be given in this colony.

I understand that the other Australian colonies avail themselves of the offer of the New South Wales Government and send men to this gunnery school for artillery instruction. I recommended that the same course should be followed by this colony; but, unfortunately for the welfare of the Force, my recommendation was not approved, and the offer was declined. I was especially anxious that one officer at least of the Permanent Force should go through this course, as none of

those serving in the colony, at present have ever been through a proper detail course of instruction in artillery duties.

The three artillery instructors from the Imperial service we now have in the colony continue to give every satisfaction, and the artillery portion of the Volunteer Force throughout the colony are deriving much benefit from their instruction.

So that we may not altogether lose the services of trained men who leave the Force after having put in a few years' service, I have submitted to you for approval my proposals for the future terms of enlistment, which provides for the formation of a reserve to the Permanent Force.

Both the pay and position of the artificers has been approved during the past year.

I again recommend that married quarters should be erected at the four centres for the married men of the Force, and that recreation-rooms and gymnasiums should be provided.

VOLUNTEERS.

The establishment of corps as sanctioned by regulations is now practically complete. During the past year the following corps have been accepted: Four corps of Mounted Rifles, one Engineer corps, six Infantry corps, one Bearer corps. The following is the present District Establishment of the Volunteer Force;—

Auckland District—

2 naval artillery corps,	1 company engineers,
1 garrison artillery corps,	15 companies infantry (2 battalions),
1 submarine-mining corps,	1 cycle corps (under offer),
4 companies mounted rifles (1 battalion),	1 bearer corps;
1 battery field artillery,	

Wellington District—

2 naval artillery corps,	1 battery field artillery,
1 submarine-mining corps,	19 companies infantry (3 battalions),
5 companies mounted rifles (1 battalion),	1 cycle corps;

Canterbury District—

1 naval artillery corps,	1 company engineers,
1 company garrison artillery,	16 companies infantry (2 battalions),
4 companies mounted infantry,	1 cycle corps,
1 battery field artillery,	1 bearer corps;

Otago District—

2 companies naval artillery,	16 companies infantry (2 battalions),
4 companies mounted rifles (1 battalion),	1 cycle corps,
1 battery field artillery),	1 bearer corps;
1 company engineers,	

Nelson District—

1 company mounted rifles,	9 companies infantry:
1 field battery (2 guns),	
Making a total for the colony of—	
7 companies naval artillery,	3 companies engineers,
2 companies garrison artillery,	75 companies infantry,
2 submarine-mining corps,	4 cycle corps,
18 companies mounted rifles,	3 bearer corps;
5 field batteries,	

with a total enrolled strength on the 30th June, 1899, of over 7,000 men.

In addition to the above, three companies of infantry are in course of voluntary disbandment.

During the past year the enthusiasm for volunteering has been very great, and offers of the services of corps have been received from all parts of the colony. Owing to the authorised strength of the volunteering establishment being practically complete, we have had to refuse the services of not less than fifty proposed new corps. The Government have it, I understand, under consideration to ask for extra funds for extra corps in localities where their services could be quickly utilised in the general defence scheme of the colony.

MOUNTED CORPS.

I was able to get three corps of the Wellington Battalion of Mounted Rifles into combined camp last September; but in none of the other districts could this be arranged, except at Easter time, during the past year.

A proposal which emanated from the officer commanding the Otago Battalion of Mounted Rifles that the mounted corps should all be allowed to remain in camp at Easter for seven days was sanctioned, but the results were most disappointing. This may probably have been due to the fact that not sufficient notice was given to the Volunteers of the concession being granted. In the Auckland District alone did the men remain out for more than four days at Easter. For the extra days they were in camp they drew 2s. 6d. a day, with an addition of 1s. 6d. daily for forage. It is of the utmost importance that the companies should be instructed to work together, and I propose giving it another trial this year.

As I pointed out in my last annual report, the mounted men only get the same allowance for their company camp as the infantry Volunteers, and have to pay for the forage of their horses out

of their own pockets. This is an anomaly which should no longer be allowed to exist. The men should be granted an allowance of 1s. 6d. a day whilst in camp for forage, and the Volunteer regulations should be amended to this effect. This would remove a long-standing grievance, and be a boon much appreciated by the men. The mounted branch of the service is worthy of all encouragement, and should be treated with all fairness.

The Martini-Enfield rifle and carbine having practically the same range and being equally powerful weapons, it has been decided to arm all the mounted corps with the carbine, it being a handier weapon to carry when riding. This change cannot be carried out until the supply of Martini-Enfield arms now under order from England is received. The carbine will be carried in the bucket now on issue to the troops, which so far has proved a success.

The mounted branch of the service suffers from want of qualified instructors. We have now eighteen corps in existence, scattered all over the colony and only one Instructor. This officer attends all their Company camps, and is of the greatest assistance to the commanding officers; but as he has duties to perform in connection with the Permanent Force he cannot devote the whole of his time to the instruction of the mounted corps. He should have no other work to do but instruction work, and should be free to move about and devote a certain time each year to each district. I hope this want of instruction will be somewhat remedied when the non-commissioned officers arrive from England, as some of them, I trust, will have gone through the mounted infantry course at Aldershot.

My last year's recommendation to increase the capitation of the mounted corps by £1 has not yet been approved.

FIELD ARTILLERY.

The 15-pr. field battery ordered last year from England has not yet been received. By the time the Imperial authorities decided on the change to quick-firing guns for field service, the manufacture of the battery had been so far advanced that it was impossible to provide it with a quick-firing breech mechanism. Certain modifications, however, have been introduced which will much accelerate its speed of gun-fire in action, and render it for all practical purposes a quick-firing battery.

I understood last year that orders were to be given annually for one field battery until the four ports were each provided with modern field guns. So far no steps have been taken to carry this out this year, and it is most essential that if a battery is to be ordered the order should be given at once. Payment will not have to be made for it this year, as the ordnance factories and gun-making firms will probably be extremely busy manufacturing new ordnance for the Imperial service, and, in order to get supply in anything like reasonable time, the order should be placed as soon as possible. The present armament of the field artillery is not a strong point of our defence.

The B Battery at Dunedin was the only field artillery corps to take advantage of the concession to turn out for paid-afternoon mounted parades during the year.

NAVAL AND GARRISON ARTILLERY.

The corps of this branch of the service take a deep interest in their work, and all ranks endeavour to perfect themselves in their duties in the forts. I have arranged that at stations, where it is feasible, the nightly drills should be carried out as frequently as can be arranged in the defence-works, and that the men should receive as much of their training as possible in the forts. Unfortunately, at all stations, some of the forts are situated at a considerable distance from the drill-halls, and can only be reached by water, and even if the Volunteers could spare the necessary time, we have no boats suitable for carrying a body of men. I trust that this year all the artillery corps will do their utmost to attend the daylight parades, for which personal payment is made, as it is only by an intimate knowledge of their forts and the system of working them, that they can fit themselves to take their parts in this line of defence.

I am putting forward proposals for prize-firing this summer by companies, and the classification of companies by their skill in competitive practice with heavy ordnance, which I hope will receive sanction.

All the artillery corps, with the exception of the Port Chalmers Naval Artillery, carried out their sixteen days' training in the works of defence. The post of this corps when mobilised for defence is at Tairaroa Heads, and the headquarters of the corps in peace time at Port Chalmers.

The defence launch at Port Chalmers can carry very few men, and the journey from Port Chalmers to the Heads occupies nearly an hour, so that practically two hours would be lost in going backward and forward daily during the time of the annual camp. Inquiries were made as to whether we could hire a boat to take all the men and to do the journey expeditiously, but the only boat offered was the Harbour Board's tug "Plucky," and the terms were £2 an hour when not required for towing, which were prohibitive. I trust that some arrangements may be made this year to enable this corps to encamp at the works of defence.

SUBMARINE MINING CORPS.

There are two corps in the colony now whose work is entirely confined to submarine mining—one at Wellington and one at Auckland, whilst a section of the Port Chalmers Navals devote their services exclusively to submarine-mining work.

We have in the colony an equipment of stores, &c., for the several mine-fields, and Instructors to teach the men the use and care of these stores, but, unfortunately, we have no boats suitable for submarine-mining work, and so are unable to carry out any practical work in laying out mines.

The present state of the boats in the colony is as follows:—

Wellington.—Defence launch "Ellen Ballance": Not at all fit for laying mines in the weather which is frequently experienced in Wellington Harbour—in fact, it sometimes happens that she

cannot even carry the men of No 2 Company to Shelly Bay. It is a matter of necessity that a new boat properly equipped for laying mines should be ordered. The "Ballance" should be transferred to Port Chalmers, for which place she would be fairly suitable. Recently £500 has been spent on repairing her; at her next overhaul her boilers and engine will have to be taken out for certain repairs to be carried out. This boat has been running in the defence service since 1885.

Auckland.—Defence launch "Isabel" is quite unsuitable for submarine-mining work, and is worn out and unfit for further service. Orders were issued last February that no further submarine-mining work should be carried out on her for fear of an accident. A new boat should be ordered as soon as possible properly fitted as a submarine miner. This launch was originally a sailing-boat, and engined in 1886, since which time she has been running in the defence service.

Lyttelton.—Defence launch "Lyttelton" reported dangerous and unfit for further service, and her use has been discontinued. The fort work is carried out by hiring a launch as circumstances require, but this is unsatisfactory and expensive. The launch "Gordon" should be transferred from Port Chalmers to Lyttelton, for the work of which place she is suitable. The "Lyttelton" has been running in the defence service since 1886, and was built in 1876.

Port Chalmers.—Defence launch "Gordon" should be transferred to Lyttelton after the arrival of the "Ballance." She is reported to be in good order, and should last for some time yet, but is unfitted for submarine-mining work. She has been running in the defence service since 1886.

Ever since my arrival in the colony I have been urging the purchase of proper submarine-mining boats, and matters have now reached such a state that their provision is a matter of absolute necessity. Two suitable boats could be built in the colony for about the same amount as it would take to get one "service miner" out from England.

Submarine-mining work is more arduous and entails more wear and tear of clothing than almost any other kind of military duty. In the Imperial Service special allowances are made in the way of pay to attract men into the submarine branch of the Volunteer Force. It is very desirable that our men should receive as much practical instruction as possible. It does not require a large number of men to be assembled for such instruction on the water, and I recommend that the submarine-mining corps should be allowed to earn their 2s. 6d. personal payment on the following terms: A daylight parade, to which is attached a personal payment of 2s. 6d. per man, and to consist of at least three hours' work, of which work on the water must form a part, may be held when fourteen members or over are present. These parades may be held during the time a corps is in annual camp if the men can be got together during the daytime; the total amount earned by the corps during a year not to exceed the sum which would be paid if the whole corps attended six daylight parades during the year. Good practical instruction could be carried out by the proposed minimum number of men, and, as mine-fields play a very important part in "coast-fortress" defence, I consider we cannot pay too much attention to instructing the corps which will be engaged in laying them out.

INFANTRY.

The battalion organisation of the infantry is now practically complete, with the exception of the Nelson District, the corps in which are so scattered that no reality can exist for them as a battalion.

The system on the whole is working well, companies are more in touch with each other, and by being brought together in battalion learn more practical soldiering than could ever be the case under the old system when individual companies stood absolutely alone.

I see no reason now why, in the near future, the system should not be adopted in the towns in its entirety, the battalion being looked upon as the unit and not the company. In the country districts, owing to the scattered positions in which many of the companies are located, it cannot be so easily carried out, but if a more extended use of the railways was allowed the system would have a great deal more reality than it has at present. It is only by companies being brought together, seeing each other drill, and noting each others defects and perfections, that a healthy spirit of rivalry can be fostered, which must tend to raise the efficiency of the whole Force. The extended use of the railways would cost the country practically nothing, although from the fact that the Railway Department has to be paid in cash for any service it performs, the Defence Department has to take up a considerable sum annually on its estimates for railway services.

At the four centres all the companies went into combined battalion camps for their annual company training, and this, as far as I have seen, has had a marked beneficial effect.

I am sorry to say that full benefit has not been taken of the authority given to hold six daylight parades annually, at a personal payment of 2s. 6d. per man. When the orders were first issued on this subject, it was stipulated that to earn the money at least three-fourths of the members of each company should be present on parade. This was found to be too high a proportion, and it was subsequently reduced to two-thirds, and certain of the conditions regulating the numbers to be present when a battalion paraded were modified. I trust that this year all the corps in the colony will do their utmost to turn out for these daylight parades, for it is only in the field that they can learn to practically apply the instruction received in the drill-halls.

I pointed out last year that the great weakness of the Volunteer Force lies in its officers and non-commissioned officers, and am glad to be able to report that a decided improvement has taken place in this respect. This is noticeable in the towns, where more constant instruction can be given than in the country districts. The officers as a body are keen to make themselves proficient, and gladly avail themselves of all opportunities of acquiring military knowledge, but as they so rarely get their men together by daylight for field manoeuvres, they have not much chance of learning the practical part of the soldier's profession. With the progress of the non-commissioned officers I am not so satisfied. A large proportion of them have no command over

their men, and seem to think that as long as they can give an order it is not their business to see that the men carry it out properly. On the arrival of the non-commissioned officers' Instructors engaged from the Imperial service, I hope to be able to furnish more thorough and systematic instruction, and to impress on the Volunteer non-commissioned officers what their proper duties and responsibilities are. In some corps men are retained as non-commissioned officers on account of their having been a long time in the corps, or of their being useful as secretary to the corps, or being fitted for some duties not connected with the military work of the corps. This custom should be discontinued, and a commanding officer should make it a rule not to retain men in the non-commissioned officer ranks who are inefficient and unwilling to perfect themselves in their military duties. Unless a corps is strong in its non-commissioned officer ranks it can never hope to be smart or efficient.

I have recommended one corps, the Thames Navals, to be disbanded for inefficiency, but so far my recommendation has not been carried out. I have seen no improvement in the corps during my stay in the colony.

A limit should be placed on the age at which men should be retained in active service in corps, and I think that after forty-five years of age men should be transferred to the district reserve, and make room for younger men in the ranks. At the age of fifty they should be altogether retired from the Force.

ENGINEER CORPS.

Equipment for bridging has been supplied to the engineer corps this year, and orders have been sent to England for stores to augment their field equipment. A corps has been raised in Auckland, but so far we have not been able to get one for Wellington. There is no difficulty in raising the men in Wellington, but no gentlemen will come forward to take up the position of officers. There is no qualified Instructor in field engineering in the colony, but instruction is given as far as circumstances permit by the staff of No. 2 Company Permanent Force. Considering everything, the older Engineer Volunteer Corps in the colony turn out and do their work in a very commendable manner.

CYCLE CORPS.

Officers and men of these corps take much interest in their work, and they would be a most useful body in case of active operations having to be carried out. The long bayonet supplied with the Martini-Enfield rifle is quite unsuitable for wear when riding a bicycle, and a supply of rifles with short bayonets has been ordered from England, which will be issued to these corps on receipt.

AMBULANCE CORPS.

Corps now exist in Auckland, Christchurch, and Dunedin, and I hope shortly to raise a corps in Wellington. The establishment of these corps has, I consider, been a great boon to the Volunteer service, as during the camps and heavy gun-practice from the Forts, the officers and men of the corps are at hand to render immediate assistance in case of accident or sudden illness. During the last Easter camps their services were much appreciated.

MEDICAL SERVICE.

Regulations have lately been published for the reorganization of the medical branch. A supply of medical stores has been supplied to each district, which are available for use at camps, and arrangements have been made for a supply of medical necessaries to be kept at the forts in case of accidents occurring when practice is being carried out.

BANDS.

The recommendations in my last year's report as regards bands have been carried out.

RIFLE CLUBS.

I have submitted proposals, almost similar to the suggestions contained in my last year's report for the inclusion of rifle clubs in the Defence Forces of the colony. These are practically in accord with those put forward by the President of the New Zealand Rifle Association, and, if carried out, should furnish us with a trained reserve for the Volunteer Force.

NEW ZEALAND RIFLE ASSOCIATION.

This year the meeting of the New Zealand Rifle Association was held at Wanganui, and the camp was under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Newall, who reported to me that the work was carried out in an orderly and business-like manner.

The position of this association with regard to the Government and the Defence Forces seems to me to be a peculiar one. It has for some years received a grant from Government of a certain number of rounds of ammunition and free railway-passes over the Government railways for members of the association who take part in the annual meeting. Each year there seems to be a doubt as to whether the grant should be continued, and this must militate against the financial position of the association. Should the Government grant at any time be withdrawn I anticipate the association will cease to exist for want of funds. The chairman of the association occupies an anomalous position as regards the Defence Force. He is a Volunteer officer actively employed in the command of a mounted battalion, and yet in such matters as the sending a rifle team, composed entirely of men from the Volunteer Force and supposed to represent the shooting strength of the Defence Forces of the colony, to Australia or England, he has been allowed to approach the Government direct with his proposals, and action has been taken by the Government without the Commander of the Forces having been asked for his opinion, or even officially informed of the fact that it was proposed to send a team from the colony until everything was practically settled.

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.

I reported last year that the pay of the Officers Commanding Districts was inadequate for their position and the work they have to do. Each officer has command of practically a brigade. He spends his days in the office, and most of his evenings on parade, for which he draws the pay of £300 annually.

Lieutenant-Colonel Newall has had nearly thirty-six years' service. He commands the Wellington District, and, in addition, is President of the Central Board of Examination, for which he gets no extra pay. He has dealt with the papers of 230 candidates since my arrival in the colony, and 455 since his appointment in April, 1891. Lieutenant-Colonels Gordon and Webb, commanding the Canterbury and Otago Districts, have twenty years' and nineteen years' commissioned service in the colony respectively.

The Permanent Staff is about to be increased by seven non-commissioned officers, appointed from infantry regiments of the Imperial service. The majority of the men at present employed are hardly worked. They have to work in the district offices all day, and spend some hours in the drill-shed instructing Volunteers at night. If any increase is made to the Volunteer Force, and if rifle-clubs are incorporated into the Defence Force of the colony, extra instructors will have to be appointed.

Last year sanction was given for the employment of three infantry officers from the Imperial Forces as Adjutants of the Volunteer Districts. The Imperial Government were asked to nominate officers for the appointment with certain qualifications. It was not possible to obtain officers willing to take this appointment with all the qualifications we asked for. The Imperial Government sent out the names of three recommended officers. One of these has been written for, as also has another officer who is a candidate for the appointment, and steps are being taken to secure the services of the third officer.

ACTIVE UNATTACHED LIST.

Before the last Easter camp I instructed the Officers Commanding Districts to invite all officers on the Acting Unattached-list in their districts to attend the camps, and to allot them staff duties in connection with the assembled forces. The result proved the very small benefit we derive from keeping up this list of officers, many of whom have left the service for years.

A small proportion of these officers only attended the camps, the majority sending excuses on grounds of sickness, want of uniform, physical incapacity, not being able to spare the time, &c.

I propose to deal with the majority of these officers under paragraph 258, Volunteer Regulations. It is useless keeping officers on this list who are either unwilling or unable to perform military duties.

ORGANIZATION OF MILITARY DISTRICTS.

The organization of the military districts as proposed on the introduction of the battalion system is complete (except in the Nelson District) and works satisfactorily. The Officer Commanding the Nelson District and his Adjutant have lately resigned for private reasons. Both these gentlemen were excellent officers and took a very great interest in their work, and I was extremely sorry to lose their services, but owing to their business occupations they were unable to devote their whole time to the duties of their command, and the outlying companies suffered from want of frequent inspections.

I have recommended that an officer should be appointed to command this district, and that he should be put on the same footing as the officers commanding the four principal districts. £50 is allowed for the pay of the Officer Commanding Nelson District and £75 for pay of the Adjutant, so that this proposal would increase the annual estimates by £175. In my last annual report I recommended that three of the companies on the West Coast should be disbanded, and from the reports I have received about their condition I see no reason to alter my opinion, but will report further when I have completed my next inspection of that district.

SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION.

I have urged in my two annual reports that a school of instruction for the Volunteer Force should be formed at Wellington. Such an institution would be of the greatest benefit to the Force, providing instruction for the officers and non-commissioned officers in practical work which they are sadly in need of, and fitting them to instruct their companies in a much more efficient manner than they can do at present, when they themselves receive but little instruction. The establishment of such a school would be very popular in the Force, the classes, I anticipate, would be well attended, and the cost would not exceed £1,200 a year.

MILITIA.

Steps have been taken this year to ascertain how many men in the colony were liable to militia-service under the conditions of the Defence Act, and militia-rolls have been compiled with the assistance of the police. I have put forward proposals which will enable us to readily put into force the conditions of the Act should, unfortunately, any necessity arise for doing so.

DEFENCE SCHEME.

The defence scheme has been completed, and sent to England for the consideration of the Imperial Defence Committee. It lays down how and where each unit is to be employed under the various contingencies which would probably arise on active service. Its weak point lies in the absence of any properly trained staff officers, and the want of these would seriously hinder its being properly carried out, should the necessity unfortunately arise.

GYMNASIUMS AND ARMOURIES.

A certain sum has been granted to the Volunteers at Dunedin for the purchase of gymnastic appliances, there being a room in the Garrison Hall which is suitable for a gymnasium; and I

have no doubt that similar amounts will be granted to the other three centres when they have suitable accommodation. No action has been taken with regard to my last years recommendations as to the provision of armouries.

DRILL-HALLS.

I put forward a proposal that a sum of £5 annually should be allowed per corps for the upkeep and repair of drill-halls, and that unless, under exceptional circumstances, no further allowances should be made. This may appear a little hard on the country corps, but at present they get no allowance at all, and many of them hire and pay for rooms, and, at any rate, it would form a nucleus on which to build up a repairing fund, and would introduce a uniform system throughout the colony.

The drill-halls at Wellington, Auckland, and Christchurch are in a bad condition, and too small for the number of Volunteers they have to accommodate. It will take a large sum to enlarge them and put them in good order, say, £5,000; but it must be remembered that the defence of the colony at present is almost purely a voluntary one, and that to keep up the requisite number of men as a permanency, we must make the service as attractive as possible, and study the comfort of the men who, from their sense of duty to the Empire, take upon themselves many hard and sometimes irksome duties.

RIFLE-RANGES.

The arming of the troops with the Martini-Enfield Rifle necessitates the expenditure of a considerable sum of money to render the ranges safe, and to give increased distances, so that the Volunteers may be trained in the increased power of their weapons.

The range at Auckland will only be used in future by trained men, and a new range will have to be acquired within easy reach of the city for volley and long-range firing, and training recruits. Such a range can be procured, and steps should be taken for acquiring it at once. The only other range in that district requiring much expenditure, will be that at the Thames, for which approximately £180 is asked. The Onehunga Corps, I hope, will obtain another site for a range.

In Wellington, extra land is about to be acquired in Polhill Gully, and for the present, field-firing can be carried out at a range within a fair distance of the city. With the exception of the ranges at Wanganui, Petone, and Napier, all the remaining ranges can be made safe for an expenditure of under £200.

In the South Island the matter of range accommodation is not so pressing, as the troops are not yet armed with the Martini-Enfield Rifle, and I do not anticipate that the required expenditure will be nearly as heavy as in the North Island.

ARMS.

All the corps in the North Island are now armed with the .303 rifles, and orders have been sent to England for sufficient arms to equip the whole of the Forces. Sanction has been given by the Imperial authorities for the colony to retain all the Martini-Henry arms at present on issue to the South Island until we receive the .303 rifles now on order. The rearmament of the whole Force will, I hope, be completed by the end of this financial year.

AMMUNITION.

The only class of ammunition of which we will require a regular supply in the future will be .303. This is now being manufactured in the colony by the Colonial Ammunition Company. Up to the present the deliveries by the Company have been small, but the ammunition is up to the specification, and I trust that as soon as they get into the full swing of manufacture we will have no cause to complain of the supplies being behind the contract-time.

The testing of the ammunition is now carried out at Auckland by a properly-qualified non-commissioned officer from the Imperial service. He has at his disposal the latest pattern velocity instruments, and the tests are carried out, as far as possible, in accordance with the custom of the Imperial service. This should be a great benefit to the company in enabling them to check faults in their manufacture, and to the colony in obtaining their supplies in every respect up to the specification standard.

MEDALS.

The issue of New Zealand war-medals still continues. After the lapse of over thirty years it should certainly be discontinued; it must now be difficult for officers to remember and certify to the services of all men who were under them during the war.

I recommended last year that, as the issue of the Imperial Volunteer long-service medal had been extended to the New Zealand Volunteers, the bestowal of the New Zealand long-service medal should be discontinued, but no action has been taken in the matter. I understand that regulations to this effect have been issued in two of the Australian Colonies, and a similar regulation should be issued in this colony.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, I may point out that I consider a marked improvement is to be noted in the condition of the Volunteer Force, both in the way of drill and discipline, and that it is decidedly in a more fit condition now to take the field than it was a couple of years ago.

Progress has been made in strengthening the defences at the principal forts. Six Maxim guns of .303 calibre have been ordered from England, and I hope to have the machine guns now in the colony all converted to the same calibre in course of time. I also trust that the second field battery will be ordered at a very early date. The new organization of the Forces has, so far, worked successfully, and will, I hope, continue to do so.

A. P. PENTON,

Colonel, Commanding New Zealand Forces.

14th July, 1899.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (1,875 copies), £5.