

1900.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEFENCES OF THE COLONY:

STATEMENT BY THE RIGHT HON. R. J. SEDDON, PREMIER AND MINISTER OF DEFENCE,
RESPECTING HARBOUR DEFENCES, COLONIAL DEFENCE FORCES, IMPERIAL RESERVE,
CADET CORPS, RIFLE-CLUBS, AND OTHER MATTERS CONNECTED WITH THE DEFENCES OF
THE COLONY.

Made in the House of Representatives, 20th July, 1900.

MR. SPEAKER,—

Honourable members will, I hope, agree with me that it is consistent with one's duty to the Empire and to the colony, and not out of place, to give attention at this juncture to the all-important subject of our defences, and, if possible, to evolve a means of perfecting, extending, and strengthening the same, both for internal and external purposes.

The equipping and sending of our contingents, and the lessons taught by the war in South Africa, must not be ignored. We must not be blind to the altered conditions that have arisen during the last few months, and which at present may appear trifling, but which in years to come may be a source of anxiety to the colony and the Empire.

Lessons taught
by sending
contingents to
South Africa.

There are also eventualities that may arise in connection with the adjustment of affairs in China; and, taking the outlook as a whole, it is prudent for us to complete our harbour defences, increase and fully equip our Volunteer corps, give a military training to our youths, encourage rifle-clubs, and, in addition, create a reserve force equal to any emergency.

Altered condi-
tions.

The chief drawback has been the finding of the capital required for the completion of our harbour defences, the equipment of the defence forces, the purchase of great and small arms and munitions of war. Important as these are, still, the opening-up and roading of our land, the construction of railways, and the development of our industries have been such a tax upon our resources that expenditure in regard to harbour defences, defence forces, rifle-clubs, and cadet corps has had, perforce, to be curtailed.

Want of capital.

I therefore, with much reason, urge that it would be of advantage to the Mother-country and to the colonies if the moneys required for harbour defences and for arming the defence forces were raised by the Imperial authorities and advanced to the colony, which should pay interest thereon at the rate of 3 per cent. per annum. In the calculation of this interest the difference between the rate at which the colony could raise the moneys and the rate at which it is obtained by the Imperial authorities would form a sinking fund to pay off the principal within a reasonable time.

Ways and means.

Interest and
sinking fund.

The proposal that the Imperial authorities should find the capital is warranted by the fact that the imperfect defences of the colonies would be remedied. There would also be the direct advantages to the Imperial authorities and the Empire in having a reserve force established ready for any contingency that might arise, and in having the most modern guns and small arms in the colonies, to the use of which our forces would be trained, and be available whenever required.

Reserve an
advantage.

There are in New Zealand thousands of men capable of bearing arms, many of them trained, good riders, and good shots; yet we have in the colony rifles only for one-fourth of their number. Again, there is a large number of men of the Native race who are well capable of bearing arms. In the past we have had a taste of the fighting qualities of the Maoris, both of those against and those with us; in fact, had it not been for the "friendlies" the troubles would not have ended so speedily or successfully as they did. All now, I am happy to

Thousands of
men available.

Maoris would
enrol in reserve.

say, are desirous of upholding the *mana* of our gracious Sovereign, and were *pouri* (sorrowful) at not being allowed to go with our sons in the contingents to South Africa. The time has long since arrived when we may with confidence trust those of the Native race who enrol themselves in our Volunteer corps, and accept them to form part of the Imperial Reserve Force suggested in this memorandum.

More rifles
wanted.

I consider that, in addition to the 303 rifles now in the colony, to provide Volunteer corps in the South Island, the new corps enrolled and to be enrolled, the men in the Imperial reserve, and to have a reasonable stock in reserve, 30,000 magazine rifles are required. The cost of same, with freight, &c., added, would be about £120,000.

Enrolment
refused; want
of capital to
equip.

In the past many companies of Volunteers and rifle-clubs have offered their services, which have been refused on account of the capital required for arms and equipment not being available. This also applies especially to the want of field batteries, and the completion and full equipment of harbour defences.

CLASSIFICATION.

Classification of
the forces.

The defence forces of the colony should be divided into the following classes, viz.: (a) Permanent Artillery, for harbour defences; (b) ordinary Volunteer Forces; (c) Imperial and Colonial Reserve Forces; (d) rifle-clubs; and (e) cadet corps.

VOLUNTEERS.

Volunteers past
and present.

When the present Commander of the Forces took office our Volunteers numbered about 4,200. The number of officers and men now enrolled totals 11,500. There are, in addition, some ninety corps offering their services, which, if accepted, would bring our total Volunteer Force up to over 18,000 officers and men. Most of the corps now offering their services are mounted. We take it for granted that, approximately, half would be mounted, and the other half infantry. The present capitaticn grant for infantry is £2 10s., and for mounted corps £3 10s. The total amount required for capitaticn would therefore be £54,000 per annum. To this must be added, for accoutrements, water-bottles, haversacks, bandoliers, &c., £1 per head per annum, or £18,000, which would bring the total cost up to £72,000.

Capitaticn
required.

Training in
camp.

To have our Volunteers efficient, increased training in camp is essential, and an additional payment may be found advisable. I estimate this at £8,000, bringing the total required to £80,000. We have now an up-to-date field battery, and other batteries have been ordered. The cost of these if manned by Volunteers would be at least £1,000 each, but if manned by permanent men and provided with horses £12,000 would be required.

Shooting-ranges
required.

To make our Volunteers efficient in shooting ranges are necessary, but with the increasing population of our centres these are difficult to get. In the past there has been a great oversight in this respect, and we find ourselves in the position at the present time of having no suitable range available for the Volunteers in the large centres of population. To make the necessary provision now would entail a cost of £20,000, and when this is done (and the sooner it is done the better) a law should be passed that no person acquiring properties adjacent to or in the vicinity of these ranges should have any claim against the colony. Rifle-ranges are as essential to our welfare as our railways are, and they should be protected and maintained for all time.

IMPERIAL RESERVE.

Of whom to
consist, and
condition of
service.

How reserve
formed.

Capitaticn on
being efficient.

Imperial Govern-
ment to find
capital.

In respect to the formation of an Imperial reserve the following shall apply: It should be open to all officers and men belonging to the ordinary Volunteer corps, to become efficient in both services, and to enlist for, say, three years in the reserve forces. The officers and men so enlisting should receive a fixed annual sum on being certificated as efficient, and be required to go into camp at stated periods for, say, four weeks in each year, the drills and camping as a Volunteer to count as part of the said four weeks. When in camp they should receive a sum amounting to at least half that now given under the Militia regulations. The Imperial Government should provide the capital required to purchase field batteries, rifles, and equipments of the force, the colonies paying a

sum equal to one-half the interest on the first cost. In respect to all the forces, when on service outside the colony the Imperial Government should provide the horses (when in the colony the men to provide their own horses), the payment of capitation and the payment of the forces when in camp in the colony, or on service outside the colony within prescribed limits, to be adjusted between the Imperial authorities and the colonial Governments on a population or other equitable basis. The reserve forces should be open for service within territorial limits, to be agreed upon between the Imperial and the colonial Governments. The pay of the officers and men when on service outside the colonies should not be less than that which is being paid to the Fifth Contingent at present serving in South Africa.

Services of men reserved within territorial limits.

Estimating the strength of our Volunteer corps at 18,000 men, we may reasonably expect that 8,000 of their number will enrol in the Imperial reserve. This number, together with 2,000 men of the Maori race who would join the reserve, would bring the number up to 10,000 men. Putting the capitation on those efficient at £5 per capita, the annual cost would be £50,000, to which must be added the pay during the time the men are in camp—say about £50,000 more. Therefore there would be in this colony 10,000 men available, at an annual cost of £100,000. Taking it for granted that, in like proportion to population, the same number of men would enrol in the Australian Colonies and Tasmania, and estimating the population of Australia and Tasmania at 3,500,000, the proportion would be 43,750 men. Added to the 10,000 in this colony, this would produce a reserve force of 53,750 men, or, in round numbers, an Imperial reserve of 50,000 men, at an annual cost of £1,000,000.

Strength of reserve estimated at 10,000 men.

Cost per annum.

Australian reserve, 50,000; cost one million per annum.

The captious critic may look upon this scheme as chimerical, and I had some doubts myself when, on the 11th May last, in a memorandum to His Excellency the Governor, I first outlined the scheme; but since then Major-General French has expressed the conviction that a force could be formed on the lines indicated, and, seeing that the drilling and training in the camp of the Volunteers would count for that required by the reserve, there is little doubt that the number estimated by me would be reached.

Major-General French indorses scheme.

RIFLE-CLUBS.

In respect of the formation of rifle-clubs, a club should consist of not less than twenty or more than forty members; and in localities where Volunteer corps have been formed only ex-Volunteers who have had not less than three years' service should be enrolled.

Formation of rifle-clubs.

In localities where there are no Volunteer corps, rifle-clubs may enrol members who have not had Volunteer service.

Qualification of members of rifle-clubs. Parades and drills necessary.

Members of rifle-clubs should, where practicable, attend a prescribed numbers of drills and parades in the course of the year, the instruction being in respect to handling arms and firing-exercise. The Government to supply rifles and ammunition to enrolled members of rifle-clubs at cost price.

After one year's enrolment members of rifle-clubs shall be tested at target practice, and on being able to make the minimum number of marks at the prescribed ranges, and having attended the prescribed number of drills and parades, they shall be entitled to receive a certificate as being efficient.

Certificate of efficiency.

For the first year every enrolled member of a rifle-club shall receive a free grant of fifty rounds of ammunition, and thereafter to every efficient member of a rifle-club there shall be allowed a free grant of one hundred rounds of ammunition, to be used at matches or at practice.

Free ammunition for practice.

Members of rifle-clubs also to have concession in the shape of free railway-passes when attending rifle-shooting competitions.

Free railway-passes.

CADET CORPS.

As has been stated by me in reply to questions, cadet corps should be established. They should be under the control of the Education Boards and the Education Department. A light rifle, similar to that used in the Colony of Victoria, should be provided for the use of, say, twenty of the elder boys in each school. The total number of boys who are in the Sixth Standard, or have passed it, is, say, 7,500, and the cost of giving one-fourth of them rifles would be £3,750.

School cadets controlled by Education Board.

Rifles to be furnished.

Ordinary cadet corps.

In addition to the school cadet corps there are a number of youths in the colony who are not old enough to join the Volunteer corps, and the formation of these cadet corps and the enrolment of these youths would be of material advantage. The number likely to be enrolled is estimated at 5,000; the cost of rifles and equipments, estimated at £3 each, would make a total of £15,000.

From school cadet to Volunteer.

The necessity for the establishment and enrolment of these cadet corps any one who has given this subject any consideration must readily admit. You commence to train the boys in the school; after leaving school they enrol in the ordinary cadet corps; and then, when they come of age, they will enrol in Volunteer corps. You take them from the schools and keep them under military training until they attain the Volunteer age. At the present time the lads, from the time they leave school until the time they attain the age at which they could be enrolled in the Volunteer corps, have their ardour damped as well as their liking for drill; and this has been the means of preventing them from enrolling in the Volunteer Forces of the colony. No such thing as conscription is at all necessary in this colony; and I am satisfied that, if the suggestion now made should be given effect to, we should have in the course of a few years fully 20,000 Volunteers equipped and complete.

Future maintenance of force of 20,000 efficient Volunteers.

NAVAL RESERVES.

Naval drill on cruisers in port.

In respect to the naval branch of the Imperial and Colonial Reserve Forces, arrangements should be made for the drilling of our Naval Volunteers, on a certain number of days in each year, on the cruisers belonging to the Australasian Squadron, these cruisers to be at the several ports in the colonies at times fixed for the purpose.

CONVERSION OF STEAMERS.

Conversion of steamers into cruisers.

There are many of the merchant steamers coming to the colony which could be converted into cruisers. At present the officers and engineers on those steamers cannot qualify for the Naval Reserve. If they were allowed to have short periods of service on the cruisers when both steamers and cruisers were in port, these officers and engineers would in time qualify for the Naval Reserve.

EQUIPMENT OF STEAMERS.

Equipment for converted steamers.

There should be naval guns, equipment, and munitions of war for these colonial steamers convertible into cruisers, to be left at a depot within the colony, to be approved by the Imperial authorities; not necessarily at a port, yet safe from seizure, and within easy reach.

AUSTRALASIAN SQUADRON.

Strengthening the Australasian Squadron.

Owing to the altered conditions it is necessary that the Australasian Squadron should be strengthened by raising the class of vessels and increasing the number of cruisers, the colonies to pay the increased cost on the basis of the present agreement.

Withdrawal of obsolete cruisers.

Several of the cruisers now in the Australasian waters, not being up to date, and not belonging to the squadron, should be withdrawn and replaced by a better and more useful class of cruisers.

MILITARY CONFERENCE.

Suggested military conference.

With the developments that have taken place in South Africa, the difficulties met with by the Australasian Colonies in enrolling, equipping, and despatching contingents for service outside the colonies point to the fact that a conference of Imperial officers, Commanders of the Forces, and Defence Ministers would be of great service in working out a scheme such as is here proposed; and should Field-Marshal Lord Roberts be able to accept the invitation to visit the colonies, he should be invited to preside at such conference. Failing this, the Imperial authorities should be asked to send one of the British generals who has taken part in the South African campaign to preside at such conference.

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