

1903.

NEW ZEALAND.

DEFENCE FORCES OF NEW ZEALAND

(REPORT ON THE), BY MAJOR-GENERAL J. M. BABINGTON, COMMANDANT OF THE FORCES.

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

SIR,—

1st August, 1903.

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

I have now completed the inspection of one hundred and sixty-seven corps, &c., in the colony, and I hope shortly to visit the remaining few. In some cases but small musters were obtained, the men representing that they could not obtain leave from their employers to attend. While endeavouring as far as possible to suit the convenience of corps as regards dates and hours of inspection, it is obvious this cannot always be done; if it were, the number of inspections during the year would be extremely few. Legislation should be applied to give the Commandant the call of all members of a corps once a year.

The Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Contingents returned to the colony from service in South Africa. The Coronation Contingent also returned in 1902. In England this contingent received many marks of hospitality and good-will. There was evidence that a better system for the constituting of contingents for active service should be looked for in the future, and it is hoped such will be done in the case of contingents proceeding again from these shores.

The progress made on the defence works during the past year is unsatisfactory. Prison labour has been repeatedly condemned on this account by former Commandants, and I entirely indorse their opinion.

The new offices for the Commandant and staff are still far from completion; little work has been done during the past year. The present offices have been repeatedly condemned on sanitary grounds, and the clerks have suffered somewhat in health. I trust this work may be pushed on.

STAFF AND ORGANIZATION.

I regret that, with the exception of an application having been made for the services of an officer of the Royal Engineers, none of the recommendations submitted by me, and referred to in my annual report of last year, have been given effect to. In the matter of staff, too, the Districts of Auckland, Otago, and Canterbury are in a less efficient state than they were in 1902. Staff officers are as essential in military affairs as the various responsible persons in any large business. It takes time to train them, and it is too late to do so when war comes. The cost to the country would be very small, and if economy has to be effected it should be carried out in matters less vital to efficiency.

The Sub-districts of South Canterbury and Invercargill have been abolished. They served little purpose but to increase work and expense, and no extra efficiency was obtained by their retention.

I regret it has apparently not been possible to consider my recommendations regarding coast defences.

The mine-fields proposed and commenced at Port Chalmers and Lyttelton have, with the approval of His Excellency the Admiral lately commanding the Australian Station, been abandoned. A very large saving of public money has been effected by this. Considerable economies, too—approximately £7,000 per annum—without loss of efficiency, have also been effected in the matters of *personnel*, extraneous services, clerical staff, &c.

The estimates for defence amounted last year to £329,864. Expense incurred by the South African contingents doubtless did something to swell the amount under this heading. How much of the £329,864 estimated for last year was expended I am not in a position to say.

PERMANENT FORCE.

The Permanent Force is divided into two branches—Artillery and Engineers. His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to allow the prefix "Royal" to be assumed, and they are now known as Royal New Zealand Artillery and Royal New Zealand Engineers.

In April, 1902, the Royal New Zealand Artillery was forty under establishment, and was recruited up to strength between April and August. During the year the strength has been maintained. While recruits were being trained the out-stations were necessarily much below strength, but during the latter part of the year this has been remedied. There is no difficulty in obtaining recruits, and there are always numerous applicants awaiting vacancies.

At the commencement of the past year the Royal New Zealand Engineers were considerably over strength, and consequently only two men have been enlisted. The company is now down to its normal strength. There is a very long list of applicants for vacancies.

As reported last year, the strength of these branches of the Defence Forces is the minimum under which the various duties required of them can be performed. It would be all too small for war conditions.

The following changes have taken place during the past year: The command of the Permanent Force has been taken over by Major St. L. M. Moore, Artillery staff officer, from the 1st February, 1903. Captain W. Coyle has been promoted to the rank of Major, and appointed Inspector Submarine Mining for the whole colony. Captain J. E. Hume returned from England, and took over the command of the Lyttelton detachment. Lieutenant M. M. Gardiner returned from England on the 5th May, 1902, and was posted to the Dunedin detachment. Lieutenant F. Symon is still in England under instruction, and will leave for New Zealand early in August on completion of his course. Lieutenants E. B. Mickle, R. O. Chesney, and G. S. Sandle, R.N.Z.A., and Lieutenant R. B. Smythe, R.N.Z.E., proceeded to South Africa with the Ninth Contingent, and returned to New Zealand on the 14th August, 1902. Lieutenants R. Fraser and R. H. Moorhouse, R.N.R., were appointed to the command of the submarine-mining vessels "Janie Seddon" and "Lady Roberts" respectively, with the honorary rank of captain; Messrs. J. McPherson and W. G. Nelson were appointed Chief Engineers in charge of engines of submarine-mining vessels and establishments, with the honorary rank of lieutenant: the value of the vessels demanded these appointments.

Besides the ordinary artillery duties, certain guns have been transferred and remounted in the various stations.

At Wellington, Auckland, Lyttelton, and Dunedin non-commissioned officers have been employed as instructors to garrison and field artillery Volunteers, and to Maxim-gun detachments of battalions of infantry Volunteers. These duties have absorbed a considerable number of men, and the work is by no means light.

Contingents leaving and returning to New Zealand have caused extra work for the Permanent Force. When the Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth New Zealand Contingents returned with sickness on board, the Permanent Force furnished squads of men for fumigating and destroying blankets, &c., and for care of sick and convalescents. These duties were very satisfactorily performed.

Men have been employed to a considerable extent at each station assisting the Public Works Department. Sentries are employed over prisoners when the latter are working for the Public Works Department. A squad of ten men was employed for three months clearing gorse on Government property at Trentham; this work is paid for.

At Wellington a new underground test and observing station has been completed at Fort Ballance.

Besides the ordinary submarine-mining duties and upkeep of station, the non-commissioned officers have acted as instructors to Volunteer submarine miners and engineers two or three nights per week, and during the annual camps of training.

The training, efficiency, and conduct of the Permanent Force for the past year have been up to the high standard of former years.

The designation "Permanent Force" was substituted for "Permanent Militia," and "Nos. 1 and 2 Service Companies" were styled "Nos. 1 and 2 Companies." Later, the names "Royal New Zealand Artillery" and "Royal New Zealand Engineers" were adopted in place of "Nos. 1 and 2 Companies" on receipt of sanction from England.

The barrack accommodation at Fort Ballance, Shelly Bay, and Lyttelton is somewhat limited.

The present system by which the Permanent Force has to find sentries over prisoners, orderlies, &c., is, with the small numbers of men available, unsatisfactory. Where clerical duties have to be performed it would be better to have a clerical staff available. Men performing the "other duties" referred to should be supernumerary to the establishment.

Workshops, where the artificers could turn out the work they are capable of, are still urgently required. Sanction has been given for the erection of these at Wellington, but, although this was received over six months ago, no further steps have apparently been taken. The loss to the colony in this respect, referred to in my annual report of 1902, still continues.

VOLUNTEERS.

The strength of the Volunteer Force (exclusive of Cadets) on the 1st August was distributed as follows:—

Auckland (Officers and Men).

1 battery of field artillery	...	...	...	...	...	77
3 companies garrison artillery	...	...	...	...	...	279
2 companies engineers	...	...	...	...	...	183
4 battalions mounted rifles (in all, 19 companies)	...	...	...	...	...	1,253
2 battalions infantry (in all, 20 companies)	...	...	...	...	...	1,080
1 bearer corps	...	...	...	...	...	34
1 garrison band	...	...	...	...	...	25

<i>Wellington (Officers and Men).</i>						
1 battery of field artillery	...	...	...	...	...	78
2 companies garrison artillery	...	...	...	...	...	208
2 companies engineers	...	...	...	...	...	134
4 battalions mounted rifles (in all, 22 companies)	...	...	...	...	...	1,296
5 battalions infantry (in all, 39 companies)	...	...	...	...	...	2,308
1 bearer corps	...	...	...	...	...	20
1 garrison band	...	...	...	...	...	25
<i>Canterbury (Officers and Men).</i>						
1 battery of field artillery	...	...	...	...	...	86
2 companies of garrison artillery	...	...	...	...	...	156
1 company engineers	...	...	...	...	...	82
3 battalions mounted rifles (in all, 14 companies)	...	...	...	...	...	893
2 battalions infantry (in all, 21 companies)	...	...	...	...	...	1,191
1 bearer corps...	...	...	...	...	...	43
1 garrison band	...	...	...	...	...	25
<i>Otago (Officers and Men).</i>						
1 battery of field artillery	...	...	...	...	...	58
2 companies garrison artillery	...	...	...	...	...	196
1 company engineers	...	...	...	...	...	98
2 battalions mounted rifles (in all, 13 companies)	...	...	...	...	...	981
3 battalions infantry (in all, 33 companies)	...	...	...	...	...	1,955
1 bearer corps...	...	...	...	...	...	41
1 garrison band	...	...	...	...	...	25
<i>Nelson (Officers and Men).</i>						
1 battery of field artillery	...	...	...	...	...	56
1 company of garrison artillery	...	...	...	...	...	38
1 battalion mounted rifles (in all, 4 companies)	...	...	...	...	...	285
2 battalions infantry (in all, 11 companies)	...	...	...	...	...	650
1 bearer corps	...	...	...	...	...	50
1 garrison band	...	...	...	...	...	25
<i>Summary (Officers and Men).</i>						
5 batteries of field artillery	...	...	...	...	...	355
10 companies of garrison artillery	...	...	...	...	...	877
6 companies of engineers	...	...	...	...	...	497
14 battalions of mounted rifles (in all, 72 companies)...	...	...	...	...	...	4,708
14 battalions of infantry (in all, 125 companies)	...	...	...	...	...	7,184
5 bearer corps	...	...	...	...	...	188
5 garrison bands	...	...	...	...	...	125
Total	...	...	...	...	...	13,934

MOUNTED CORPS.

While excellent material exists for all branches of the Defence Forces in the colony, for mounted corps this is pre-eminently the case. There are large numbers of men who are good riders, and accustomed to work such as gives them an eye for a country and inculcates independence.

A great difference in the relative efficiency of corps at present exists. This should not be so much the case as it is; the material is much the same, and the spirit of the corps leaves little to be desired, but want of system as regards instruction and of opportunities to learn have gone far in the past to militate against general efficiency being arrived at.

The weak point in the mounted branch at present is their knowledge of dismounted duties. It has been impressed on all concerned that dismounted action is the true *métier* of the mounted riflemen, and great improvement must be looked for in this most important part of their duties.

The old Manual of Instruction contained little with regard to many points that are most important to the mounted rifleman. A new Manual of Instruction has been issued, which contains all that is necessary in such a work.

A new and lighter rifle is being introduced in England, and the future wants of the colony should be met by procuring these. Mounted corps in the first instance should be armed with them.

On the whole the horses of mounted corps are serviceable. The saddlery, however, is not in all cases satisfactory, and on service the horses would suffer. Nose-bags should be provided for mounted corps.

FIELD ARTILLERY VOLUNTEERS.

The field battery at Nelson is still armed with the 6-pr. Nordenfeldt. I recommend that a three-gun battery of modern guns be purchased.

Harness has been issued to all field batteries.

A fire which destroyed the drill-shed at Christchurch destroyed the harness on issue to E Battery there; this has been replaced.

The establishment for six-gun batteries, being in excess of that required for three-gun batteries, has been reduced from a maximum of ninety-two to one of seventy. This reduction to new strength is being carried out gradually.

The field artillery, while efficient for the most part in gun drill, require very much more practice in the field. Batteries are, with the exception of D Battery, which has twelve permanent horses available, much handicapped through want of horses trained to this work. Were even one team per battery supplied this would enable a section to be exercised, and drivers, &c., to be properly trained. The upkeep of the permanent horses in Wellington has been shown to cost little or nothing, owing to the money saved in carting, &c., performed by them, and a similar system could be worked out at the other centres.

GARRISON ARTILLERY VOLUNTEERS.

The whole of the naval and garrison artillery has now been organized as a regiment of garrison artillery Volunteers, and the companies at each station have been formed into artillery divisions. The adoption of this system was necessary for the efficiency of the garrison artillery as a fighting unit. It has not in any way interfered with the individuality of the various corps, nor has any change in uniform been made.

A new system of annual practice was adopted last year, and has given good results. The shooting has been uniformly good throughout, and nearly all companies obtained a high figure of merit.

Rifles have been issued to the garrison artillery in place of carbines, it being considered that men armed with small arms should possess the best weapon available.

Sanction has been accorded for fort-manning parades by night under service conditions; this will increase efficiency.

The strength of the garrison artillery Volunteers is not sufficient for service requirements, and the formation of other companies is under consideration.

ENGINEER CORPS.

There are four field and two submarine-mining engineer companies in the colony; these have been formed into one regiment of New Zealand Engineers.

The work done, and the standard of efficiency arrived at, by both the field and the submarine-mining is satisfactory. Much technical knowledge is required in both branches of this work, and the results arrived at by these companies is commendable.

The equipment of these companies is incomplete.

INFANTRY.

The dismounted corps are, generally speaking, progressing and fairly efficient.

As with the mounted branch, corps in the infantry show a great variation in the matter of efficiency. There are a few companies who are quite fit to take the field under any conditions, but from the causes referred to in speaking of the mounted corps the majority are not at present in that desirable position. This is not their fault, but is owing to the conditions under which they serve and have up till lately been trained. More outdoor work is very much required, and every advantage should be taken of the summer mornings and evenings. Although recruits can be trained in drill-halls, little practical instruction can be imparted except in the field; drill-hall training inculcates a cramped spirit in corps. Instruction in the principles and practice of attack and defence and in detached duties is required, and can only be satisfactorily imparted in the open.

As with other branches, it has been found that in few corps subordinates have been given the opportunity of command, or exercised in instructing those junior to them. The absolute necessity of each rank possessing greater knowledge than that below it, and being in a position to instruct, has been impressed on all corps, and good results will, without doubt, ensue.

Double rank has in the present manual for instruction lately issued been abolished. While it may have been necessary when men were not armed with magazine rifles, it should not now be required.

CYCLE CORPS.

There are five cycle corps in the colony. The strength of each is twenty-seven, all ranks.

Should hostilities occur, these corps might be usefully employed, and augmented at short notice if required, but having in view the nature of the country, and probable character of operations likely to occur in the event of war, I do not recommend any further increase to the present strength of cycle corps.

Corps are being provided with new rifle clips, the old ones having been found unsatisfactory.

MEDICAL CORPS.

Regulations reorganizing the medical branch of the Defence Forces have been framed. There will shortly, it is hoped, be established in each district medical arrangements to meet such exigencies of service as are likely to occur in the colony. At present, beyond five bearer corps, insufficiently equipped, and four ambulance wagons, no medical provision can be said to exist. The present medical resources would barely meet the requirements of one battalion.

There are a number of medical officers, including many of the leading men in their profession in the colony, who give their services, and in some cases they have given their money in providing requisites for the various corps, &c. With a proper organization a very efficient and inexpensive medical corps would exist.

VETERINARY CORPS.

A veterinary corps is in process of formation, and regulations regarding the same are about to be promulgated. With a properly organized veterinary corps the services of most of the best men will doubtless be available. Much benefit as regards instruction in the care of horses will ensue. In the event of horses being required for service beyond New Zealand, either in peace or war, a serviceable supply, and one creditable to the colony, would be despatched.

CADET CORPS.

I pointed out in my annual report last year the value of the training imparted by the institution of cadet corps, and would beg again to invite consideration to this important matter. I am strongly of opinion that every English-speaking boy throughout the Empire should be trained as a cadet, and that the future safety of the Empire demands either this or conscription.

In this colony there are now forty-six cadet corps under the Defence Department. Their efficiency, generally speaking, is very satisfactory. Fourteen additional corps have been formed during the past year.

Fifteen officers and three non-commissioned officers have passed through the School of Instruction.

The L.M.E. and M.E. carbines which have been withdrawn from adult corps are being issued to cadets.

Only one or two corps have waistbelts, and none bandoliers: as soon as the necessary equipment is available I trust cadet corps will be supplied. I recommend that haversacks be issued to corps.

I beg to recommend that the present issue of ammunition (fifty rounds per cadet) be doubled. Class firing exhausts all the present issue, leaving nothing for practice.

Cadets are allowed to attend camp with adult corps, and good has resulted from this.

Cadet companies should be formed into battalions. On service they would be placed on positions suitable to them, and not amalgamated with adult corps.

RIFLE CLUBS.

There are 109 rifle clubs in existence. Their present position is unsatisfactory to all concerned. It is hoped that this will soon be amended, and that they may shortly form more of an integral part of the Defence Forces than they do at present. Lack of training and discipline, and the open terms for membership as regards age, physical fitness for service, &c., however, render rifle clubs of but small value as a fighting force compared to trained corps.

NEW ZEALAND DEFENCE FORCES RIFLE ASSOCIATION.

A successful meeting was held at Trentham on the 5th March, 1903, and following days. The total number of entries was 350, against that of 315 in 1902. The competitions were modelled more on service conditions than in previous years. It is hoped a further advance will be made in this direction next year. Young shots were encouraged, and the response and results were satisfactory.

The range is gradually being improved as funds admit of it; it has all the requirements of an excellent one.

No team was sent to compete at Bisley this year, as some of the best shots were unable to leave the colony, and the results of last year did not justify a team being sent unless the services of all such were available.

CAMPS AND CAMP EQUIPMENT.

It was considered advisable again this year to limit the work done at camps to company-training. Next year an advance on this will, it is hoped, be possible, and that units may be exercised in a scheme on the lines of that on which they would have to act in the event of war.

Greater value is to be looked for from camp training than has formerly been acquired. Where possible camps should be established some miles apart. The troops should be exercised under a "General idea" known to all. "Special ideas" creating situations that might occur in war should be issued for each exercise. These exercises may last one or more days, as circumstances permit. The "Rules for Manœuvres" should be observed, and officers to act as umpires detailed. At the end of each day's work observations by the Umpire-in-Chief should be published and communicated to all concerned. Every endeavour should be made to render the attendance at camps as large as possible. The work there is practical, and a man will learn more in camp in one day than he will in a drill-hall in a month.

A supply of intrenching tools should be provided, and a proportion issued to infantry battalions. The field engineer corps should also be fully equipped in this respect.

ARMS, EQUIPMENT, AND CLOTHING.

All corps are now armed with the magazine rifle, and twenty-three of the cadet corps with .303 magazine carbines, and the balance of the cadet corps with M.E. carbines. The care of arms by corps shows an improvement, and the annual inspection by qualified armourers now carried out has been productive of much good in this direction.

In very many cases the equipment of corps is incomplete, and this is discouraging to them. A serviceable equipment has been approved, and it is hoped that deficiencies may be met with as little delay as possible.

The control of arms and equipment is still under the department of the Under-Secretary of Defence; this arrangement is unconstitutional and unsatisfactory.

It is hoped that by July, 1904, all corps will be in possession of a service dress (khaki). Few corps are in possession of greatcoats and waterproof sheets; the former are necessary even in peace time, and the latter are essential in war and for manœuvres. A scheme by which Government should clothe the Defence Forces has been submitted. Full dress has been left optional, corps being allowed to supply themselves with it on submitting patterns that are approved of. Full dress is provided for at the expense of corps; it costs the country nothing, and history indicates that dress, next to war, is the best recruiting-sergeant.

IMPERIAL RESERVE.

I regret that the suggestions I put forward regarding the formation of an Imperial Reserve do not appear to have been found practicable. The favourable opportunity for the formation of such a Reserve seems now to have passed, most of the men who served in South Africa having dispersed to occupations in this and in other countries. Should a strain on the Empire's resources again occur, the absence of an Imperial Reserve will be felt, and will occasion extra expense in money and men.

SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION.

The School of Instruction is doing good work. Since the 1st April, 1902, 375 officers and non-commissioned officers have passed through courses. The cost of the school has been reduced from £9 10s. 3d. to £4 15s. per head, and the system of carrying on instruction simultaneously at different centres, not only enables a very much larger number of officers and non-commissioned officers to attend; it also reduces the expenditure. The courses of instruction have been carried out as far as possible in accordance with the syllabus laid down in the Volunteer Regulations, though in the cases of some candidates it becomes necessary to devote a considerable amount of time to instruction of a very elementary nature, thus curtailing the more advanced instruction which it is the special function of the school to impart. This must happen, for where the general efficiency of the officers and non-commissioned officers is low, it would be impolitic to reject candidates for the sole reason that they were not acquainted with the elements of their work. Endeavour has, in such cases, been made to improve their knowledge. Generally speaking, it is found that candidates are anxious to learn when once they have realised their needs. They have, with a very few exceptions, been regular in attendance, and have done their best to profit by instruction. It is to be regretted that more senior officers do not attend the school. In many cases the acting-lieutenants go through the courses, thereby learning methods which are unknown to their senior officers. In course of time I have no doubt that a very considerable improvement in the efficiency of corps will show itself from the instruction given at the school. I have little difficulty at inspections of corps in recognising those officers who have attended the School of Instruction.

SIGNALLING.

A signalling corps would be an important accession to the Defence Forces, and the formation of one is under consideration. If such could be raised from Post and Telegraph employees it should soon become an efficient unit, and the value of such a corps in war is too well known to require further reference to it here. It is very much better to have signallers trained by corps than to have men in various units educated to this work. The latter are, even in a regular army, perpetually changing, and systematic instruction is difficult. In a Volunteer Force these disabilities would be multiplied a hundred-fold, and the men have not the time to learn their ordinary work and signalling as well.

ARMY SERVICE CORPS.

A company in each headquarters of districts trained to the work of supply and transport in the field would establish the nucleus of a service that is indispensable in war. It is hoped these companies may shortly be formed. The numbers might be safely limited to those requisite for the supply of men to fill the responsible positions; the rank and file, so to speak, could be recruited from the various trades on the threatened outbreak of hostilities, and would require little or no instruction in their duties.

DRILL-HALLS AND RIFLE RANGES.

Generally speaking, corps are well provided for in this matter of drill-halls. Oamaru, however, is an exception, and a very inadequate one exists there. It is a good Volunteering centre, and it is important that a suitable hall should exist.

An excellent drill-hall has been completed at Auckland, and a fresh impetus has thus been given to Volunteering thereby.

The drill-shed at Christchurch was burnt down in February. The battery harness and Queen's Cadets equipment were lost. From occurrences about the same time it would appear that this was the work of an incendiary. Good work was done at the fire by the E Battery.

During the past year nineteen new rifle ranges have been arranged for, and it has been found necessary to close three other ranges as unsuitable. Generally speaking, corps are well provided for in the matter of ranges.

AMMUNITION.

It is satisfactory to be able to report that orders for the establishment of a reserve supply of small-arm ammunition have been given. It is to be hoped that this reserve will, as finances admit of it, be brought up to adequate requirements. The storage of ammunition should, as far as possible, be decentralised.

The quality of the small-arm ammunition supplied by the Colonial Ammunition Company continues to be satisfactory. It is a matter for regret that the capacity for supply of small-arm ammunition of this company is not greater, and that no facilities for the manufacture of gun-ammunition exist.

The price of small-arm ammunition continues unreduced. Gaudet ammunition, however, is now manufactured in the colony, and is comparatively cheap.

I regret that it has apparently been found necessary to curtail the annual practice supply of gun-ammunition.

From some cause or other the Defence Force of this colony does not occupy that position which its work and importance to the colony entitles it to. Its members give their time, and in many instances their money, in the course of learning that profession which will alone serve the country in the hour of need, and they deserve the greatest credit for doing so. As we all know, when war comes the military occupy the first place in the people's thoughts, and it does not seem equitable that in peace they should occupy the last, but for the most part this is the case. Men by becoming Volunteers put their loyalty into a practical form. They are the insurance against war risks for the country and for those who, for one reason or another, give no time to military training. The case of the officers holding commands, and staff officers under the Defence Department too, would appear one for special consideration. While Civil servants receive compensation, no length of service can qualify these officers for such, and the pay of their appointments is not so remunerative as to admit of their saving money. It must be also remembered that their positions are by no means insured, and many are merely holding temporary appointments. These officers have no opportunities to make money in business; and considering the few there are, and the little expense it would consequently be to the country, it does not appear to be too much to suggest that a retiring-allowance according to scale should be granted them.

The numbers of the Defence Forces of New Zealand are, as has been stated elsewhere, 13,934 of all ranks. This shows for the last twelve months a decrease of 1,457. Of this number eighty-five men are accounted for by the reduction of batteries of field artillery to three guns. Considering that the South African war came to an end over a year ago, this speaks well for the spirit of the Force.

I find, generally speaking, an earnest desire evinced throughout the Defence Forces to adopt those means requisite for efficiency. There exists, however, some serious obstacles to this desirable end being attained, and of these I will refer here to two. One is the system of election of officers, and the other the difficulty in many instances of men being able to obtain leave from their employers. Regarding the first, I am not aware of any institution, civil or military, where this practice pertains, and I am aware that wherever in military life it has been tried it has been a complete failure. The system places both officers and men in a false position, and is utterly subversive of discipline. Through it, too, are lost to the colony the services of many men who would make excellent officers, but who naturally will not serve under such conditions. As regards the second disability I have mentioned, this is also a grave one, and unless some scheme to meet it can be formulated it will very seriously affect Volunteering in New Zealand; it is even doing so now. There would seem to be two alternatives to meet this case. Either the country must be prepared to remunerate the employer for the loss of the employee's services, or the Militia Act must be put in force for, say, a week annually. I fully appreciate the employers' arguments, but unless men are trained they cannot become efficient, and the country will find itself paying for an article of little value to it. When war comes the loss will far outweigh any inconveniences that might be occasioned now.

A universal system of training has now been established. Officers and non-commissioned officers are required to qualify for their positions by becoming in each instance more proficient than the rank below them, and by so adopting that system on which alone any sound business can be created. But little attention has apparently been formerly paid to this, and corps have been too ready to rely solely on the services of Instructors. The visits of Officers commanding Districts, and those in authority, have been too few, and units have suffered in consequence.

Revised Manuals of Instruction for mounted and dismounted corps have been issued. That for the latter has inaugurated the system of single rank, and assimilated the drill to that of the mounted branch. By this means the dismounted man who can ride will be able to at once take his place in the ranks of a mounted corps if required. The drill also is in itself rendered simpler. All ceremonial and unpractical work is abolished.

The Volunteer Regulations have been rewritten. The terms for earning capitation have been revised, and rendered more suitable to the various avocations now followed. Concessions have been granted in those places where it was considered advisable.

Formerly a considerable sum of money was voted by Parliament to be distributed in prizes for rifle shooting; this is now given for efficiency, and benefit will accrue.

It has been considered that where corps are armed with small arms they should possess the most effective, and the carbines previously in possession have been withdrawn, rifles being substituted for them. The carbines have been issued to cadets who were previously armed with Sniders.

Although improvement in discipline has been effected, much still requires to be done to enable me to report it as satisfactory. Unless a satisfactory discipline can be established in a corps, the question of its retention should be considered, as such a corps is of little or no value to the State. Political influence is only too often sought and accorded, and the existence of partisanship is in cases evident. As I have previously pointed out, every facility is given by regulations for the representation of any matter, and such representations receive every consideration. Those, too, who lend themselves to methods proscribed by regulations seriously retard the establishment of discipline, and do much to undermine the efficiency of the Force. Partisanship also has a most pernicious influence on the well-being of the Force, and those who have it in their power to discourage it must be held responsible where it occurs.

The battalion system is working fairly well. In some cases, where the corps are scattered, it is difficult for commanding officers to carry out as frequent inspections as are necessary. Every endeavour must, however, be made to do so, for the corps suffer where this is not done.

At the officers' clubs in the various centres periodical lectures are delivered by members, to the benefit of all concerned.

Classes for officers and non-commissioned officers have been inaugurated in some districts, and with good results; this is especially the case in the Otago District.

The various "lists" which existed have been abolished, and the "Active" and "Retired" Lists substituted. On the former are placed all those officers who are serving or who are still physically fit to serve, and desire their names recorded as such. The Retired List comprises all those who have served, but who from age or other disabilities are no longer in a position to do so. It is instituted as an honourable record of those who have served their country and have retired in the ordinary course of events.

No attempt seems to have previously been made to ascertain or record the progress or otherwise in the matter of musketry. There has, owing to the re-arming of the Defence Forces with the magazine rifle, been a difficulty in arriving at a comparison, but steps are being taken to place on record future results.

The Hon. the Minister of Defence.

J. M. BABINGTON, Major-General,
Commandant of New Zealand Defence Forces.

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