South African Experience.

62. In other words, efforts have been made, and are still being made, in the Imperial Army to apply in peace a system which actual recent war experience has demonstrated will be fairly war-proof. The War Office entered upon the South African campaign under the impression that a unit could be made to consume its own smoke in all matters of interior economy. Never were the heads of a department more rudely undeceived. Rarely has any body of men been more freely abused. Yet—judging the matter now more calmly—it may be admitted that no average administrator could have foreseen that when the Forces in South Africa were once fairly on the move all traces of a man who left his unit would be lost, alike by relatives and the military authorities, for weeks, months, or sometimes for ever! The commanding officer was aware only that the man had disappeared, and no machinery existed anywhere for systematically keeping in touch with him. A so-called " casualty office " was, it is true, hastily improvised at Cape Town, and a large number of officers and clerks were therein employed, and certainly improvised methods such as these were better than nothing—and that is about all that could be said.

Previous System.

63. Again, the pay-lists which officers commanding squadrons and companies were called on to keep prior to and during the South African War were caviare to the general — not to speak of the subaltern. Even in peace, when the services of trained pay-sergeants were available, these accounts were the bane of the average regimental officer. What then could be expected in war, where irregular officers were far too preoccupied with the idea of administering a beating to the enemy to dream of administering anything so tame as a pay-sheet ? Usually the Gordian knot was cut, as in classic fable, by the sword. No pay-lists were kept up at all, and the subsequent business of settling up was a prolonged and a profoundly extravagant operation to that grand old milch-cow, the British public.

Adoption of War System recommended.

64. In the minor affairs of war, as in the greatest operations, simplicity, both of conception and design, is the hall-mark of the true metal. In Part II, Chapter XVI, of the Field Service Regulations the war system as regards office-work—an extremely simple system—is fully described, and I suggest respectfully that this system should, as far as local conditions admit, be accepted for peace-work in Australia. Not only will the transition from a peace to a war footing be thus more easily effected, but under ordinary conditions the existing strain of excessive correspondence, whether with units or in Staff offices, should be very sensibly eased.

APPENDIX X.

Statistical Returns and Reports due from Areas and Units.

Nature of Return.	Present System.			Proposed System.		
	Responsible.	When rendered.	To whom rendered.	Responsible.	When rendered.	To whom rendered.
Return of registration (M.T. 7)	Group officer ..	Monthly ..	District Head-quarters	Record Office	Quarterly ..	Army Head-quarters.
Numerical states by units (B. 83)	Unit commander through group officer	,, ..	Ditto ..	,,	,, ..	Ditto.*
Return of transfers (in and out) with other districts (B. 86)	Group officer ..	,, ..	,, ..	,,	,, ..	,,
Return of persons exempted by Magistrates	,, ,, ..	,, ..	,, ..	,,	,, ..	,,
Return of persons claiming exemption on grounds of religious belief	,, ..	,, ..	,, ..	,,	Half-yearly ..	,,
Return of prosecutions ..	,, ..	,, ..	,, ..	,,	Monthly ..	,,
Confidential reports, N.Z.P.S. (B. 11)	Group officer and Adjutant	Quarterly	,, ..	Area commander	Annually ..	District Head-quarters.
Addresses of officers on Reserve and Retired List	Headquarters of units	Half-yearly	,, ..	Record Office	,, ..	Army Head-quarters.
Statement of numbers present at annual training in camp E. 4 (Army Form E. 657A)	Headquarters of units	Within ten days of completion of camp	,, ..	Unit commander	On completion of camp	District Head-quarters.

* A general return showing the strength of units might be published half-yearly and issued to all concerned. Names of transferees back of existing forms to be discontinued.