

that officer—to train and despatch troops, and conduct the operations of the Expeditionary Force generally at its home base. The present General Officer Commanding was at the time Quartermaster-General, and purely as a matter of economy, as it was not thought the war was going to be the long affair it has since turned out, it was decided to combine the duties of these two high offices. The time has now come for a clear division of those duties, because they often clash. The Administrative Department is only a portion of the Army machine, and the General Officer Commanding should therefore be the ultimate Court of appeal in case of dispute. But, because the General Officer Commanding, as Quartermaster-General, has to deal with administrative matters, it is natural enough that the officers charged with the Training Branches, which should be kept quite separate and distinct from Administration, should have got into the habit of participating in matters quite outside their true functions, and thus the two sides of military procedure have become mixed. The General Officer Commanding has only been able to carry on these two important offices by an enormous amount of labour and overwork, which, going on for years without break, has made serious inroads upon his health.

The administrative side, as shown on the Quartermaster-General's chart, comprises Equipment and Ordnance Stores, Financial Services, Movements and Quartering, Supplies and Transport, Construction and Maintenance, and Veterinary Services. The General Officer Commanding should really be what is known in a private concern as general manager—supervising the whole, doing as little as possible of detailed work himself, but seeing that the work of the Department is carried on economically and efficiently. Above all, he should have ample leisure for reflection, so that his judgment may be cool and unhurried. It is clear to us that the combined duties of General Officer Commanding and Quartermaster-General could not have been performed had the work been entrusted to a less practical man than the General Officer Commanding, and had he not had the energy and sustaining power of such a man as the present Minister of Defence behind him the whole administrative system would have been, in our opinion, in serious jeopardy, instead of having achieved, as it has done, a great measure of success. We are of the deliberate opinion that this is largely due to the General Officer Commanding's close application to his work, his wide practical knowledge of local conditions, his sympathy with the officers under him, and his long experience as a citizen soldier.

The branches under the circumstances outlined have been left without the necessary co-ordination, and their success has depended upon the initiative and the strength of the officers in charge. It can safely be said of each and every one of them that he has given of the best that is in him, and in adversely criticizing some of those officers it will be understood that they have failed not in will but in skill.

In each of the four military districts—Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury, Otago—a Colonel is in command, and under him an Administrative Section in miniature of Headquarters. Quite clearly there are too many officers on the payroll, especially in view of the reduced Territorial training. There have been several efforts to take this matter in hand with a view to pruning and consolidating the number of officers at General Headquarters and in the districts; but the work has piled in, the senior officers were overworked and could not pause sufficiently long to organize, and, in short, it was the business of nobody in particular.

In October, 1917, the General Officer Commanding summoned a conference of Officers Commanding Districts, discussed the question of the reduction of staff, and asked them to make recommendations. These officers duly submitted recommendations which showed where good savings could be effected. Some were at once carried out; others were postponed because of the appointment of this Commission. It is amusing to note, however, that the suggestion of the Officer Commanding the Wellington District, pointing out where savings could be effected amounting to £17,000 a year, was coldly received and commented on by the Adjutant-General—not so much because he doubted the possibility of making this big saving, but because the Officer Commanding the District had gone “beyond the order of leave,” as it were, and suggested the lopping-off of excrescences which had not been included in the subject-matter of the conference!