

1877.

NEW ZEALAND.

ARMED CONSTABULARY FORCE.

(ANNUAL REPORT OF COMMISSIONER.)

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

The COMMISSIONER, Armed Constabulary Force, to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Armed Constabulary Office, Wellington, 18th July, 1877.

In compliance with clause No. 159 of the Armed Constabulary Regulations, I have the honor to submit the following report for the year 1876–77.

At the close of the last financial year the Force consisted of 676 of all ranks. During the year there have been 507 enrolled, including the officers and constables of the Provincial police, making a total of 1,183. From that number is to be deducted 395 who have become non-effective in consequence of reduction and other causes, leaving the strength at the close of the year 788. (*Vide* tables 1, 2, 3.)

In the early part of January last it was decided by the Government to amalgamate the Provincial police with the Armed Constabulary, and this has been carried out as follows:—

The provincial districts remain very nearly as before, except that the officers and men of the local police have been sworn in under “The Armed Constabulary Act, 1867,” and their total number increased by transfers from the Armed Constabulary from 318 to 427, the present strength. The pay and allowances of the non-commissioned officers and constables has also been fixed at a uniform rate, instead of being as formerly in some districts double that of others. By this arrangement the pay of the men in most districts is slightly increased, though in a few cases a reduction had to be made.

The Armed Constabulary has been reduced from 676 to 350, and distributed as follows:—Four divisions, called “Reserve Divisions,” have been formed, each consisting of 80 of all ranks, and a dépôt at Wellington numbering 30, making a total as above, these divisions being stationed as follows:—

- One division, Waikato District;
- One division, Taupo District;
- One division, Taranaki and Patea Districts;
- One division, Opotiki and Wairoa Districts.

The “Reserve Divisions” are trained and equipped for field service, and are essentially a field force, which in case of emergency would be assisted by the police divisions, the men for which receive a short training in company, rifle, and skirmishing drill at the dépôt before being transferred to the police.

The new Constabulary Bill provides for a retiring allowance, which will be a great boon to the Force, and will, I trust, induce men to remain, as the difficulty of replacing well trained and efficient constables can only be fully understood by those versed in police matters, who are aware that a constable’s knowledge of his duty is only acquired after many years of experience.

There are at present in the Districts of Auckland, Napier, and Nelson some special or district constables, the majority of whom are of little or no service for the prevention or detection of crime, and who, from their almost sole dependence for a livelihood upon the community amongst whom they reside, cannot be expected to act independently or impartially. The police protection they afford is very inadequate to the growing wants of the sub-districts where they are respectively stationed, which are rapidly increasing in population and importance; it is therefore intended to replace these men by efficient constables as soon as the change can be conveniently carried out.

It is satisfactory to learn that a comparison of the criminal statistics for the past twelve months with the preceding year show that, while there is but slight variation in the character of offences, the total number of arrests has diminished, notwithstanding the increase of population. With regard to aboriginal criminals, I regret to say the number is increasing, no less than sixteen Maori offenders having been convicted at the Supreme Court, Auckland, during the year 1876, the majority of the convictions being for breaking into stores and dwelling-houses, and for horse stealing.

The distribution of the police, as shown in Table No. 4, is such that very general protection is afforded throughout the colony, and with the facilities of telegraph communication, which extends to nearly all the places where police are stationed, together with the speedy means of travelling by railway, tends greatly to expedite the general working of the service, and to economy in departmental expenditure.

The Naval “Training School” and “Industrial Schools” are (each in its own way) steadily and satisfactorily doing the work of reclaiming the little “waifs” of society, who, now forcibly rescued