

Armed constabulary to furnish permanent detachments for batteries.

There already exists in the colony a force—the armed constabulary—of a very superior character. The depôt for this force is at Wellington ; and, in order to render it in every way fitted to supply the permanent detachments for the batteries, it would only be necessary to appoint a qualified artillery instructor and provide the necessary appliances for drill. Every man after he had passed in infantry drill—to enable him to perform his ordinary duties—should be put through a course of gunnery instruction, including shot practice. The amount of knowledge, required to work the ordnance in the several batteries, will be small and easily acquired, as all the guns will be alike in character, and similarly worked and mounted.

Naval brigades to be established to furnish auxiliary detachments and crews for torpedo boats.

The auxiliary detachments, which are to reinforce the permanent men, should be organized on a system analogous to the naval reserve which is maintained in Victoria for service afloat and on shore. Under the purely volunteer system there is practically no hold over the men. By the Victorian system the men serve under a Discipline Act, receive retaining fees, and are compelled to attend drill.

Where the number of men required at each place is small, it is important to avoid the creation of a number of small corps—an evil which, in the New Zealand Volunteer Force, has reached such serious dimensions as to be fatal to military efficiency. I propose, therefore, to establish at Auckland, Wellington, Lyttelton, and Port Chalmers naval brigades, which would furnish detachments for working the guns, garrisons for the batteries, and crews for the torpedo boats. In this manner the defence against attack by sea would be in the hands of one commander at each port.

Considering that everything will depend upon the efficiency of the proposed batteries, it is imperative that the gunners should be carefully trained men, who would be available when required. Under the system proposed this training could be ensured, as the men would be paid for attendance at drill.

Secondly. With respect to the crews of the torpedo boats:—The number of boats proposed is twelve—three at each of the principal ports : Auckland, Wellington, Lyttelton, and Port Chalmers. At least three men would be required for each boat : one to command, an engineer for the engines, and one man to work the spar torpedo. The sections of the naval brigades entrusted with the torpedo boats might number in peace time ten men. In time of war the crews would have to be permanently enrolled, and so increased as to have men in reserve to fill up vacancies, and ready for duty, day and night, so long as the war lasted.

The same arrangements would be required at other places on the coast, where Government or private steam launches were available for defensive purposes.