

supported by the opinions, not only of the officers appointed last year to inspect the force, but of those volunteer officers with whom I was more immediately brought into contact during my visit.

Searching
enquiry
necessary
before making
changes.

At the same time I consider that, before any changes are introduced, it will be necessary to institute a more searching enquiry into the whole subject, and to refer to what is being done elsewhere, and especially in England, where the efficiency of the volunteer forces has been much increased.

Reduction in
number of
corps.

I have already drawn attention to the necessity for reducing the number of corps. It will be seen from a return in the Appendix to this report, that there are, exclusive of the cadets, 118 corps for a force of 8,032 officers and men; that several corps do not number 40 officers and men, and not more than 13 corps exceed 100 officers and men. The result is that, at some of the parades of a corps, there are not sufficient men to form a squad for drill; and, on the occasion of my inspecting the Auckland volunteers, there were seven corps to make up a strength of 349 of all ranks. The administration and command of a number of small corps is thereby rendered more difficult; and it is necessary, in the interests of economy, discipline, and efficiency, that the present state of things should be rectified.

The remedy is to consolidate, wherever practicable, the corps of infantry into small battalions of four companies each, with one set of rules for their government, one field officer in command, and one list for the promotion of officers. A step in the right direction has already been taken, by the recent consolidation of the batteries of artillery into one regiment for the whole colony.

Uniformity
of clothing.

The subject of uniformity in clothing has already engaged the attention of the military authorities; and, from enquiries I have made, I am satisfied that there will be no difficulty in carrying out the proposal, as the majority of the volunteers fully recognise its necessity. The best plan will be to stop at once all issues of clothing of the present patterns, and fix a date after which the uniformity is to take effect. I have reason to believe that a considerable saving on the present capitation vote would be effected if the clothing and equipment of the force were to be placed on a different footing, in order that the materials could be procured in large quantities and at wholesale prices, to be made up locally. At present I am told the cost of clothing some corps is excessive.

Capitation
allowance.

With regard to the capitation allowance, I recommend that there should be only one rate for all arms, and that the whole subject should be investigated with the view to ascertaining how the grant has hitherto been expended. A regular audit should be at once instituted, as I am informed that at present there is no Government check whatever on the expenditure, once the amount claimed by each corps has been paid over to it. It is probable that savings may be effected, which will render it unnecessary to increase the allowance; but should any augmentation be found to be necessary, after due enquiry, greater efficiency should be required in return.