

1882.
NEW ZEALAND.

REORGANIZATION OF THE VOLUNTEER FORCE

(REPORT OF THE BOARD OF OFFICERS ON THE).

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

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF OFFICERS ORDERED TO ASSEMBLE AND REPORT UPON EVERY BRANCH OF THE PRESENT VOLUNTEER SYSTEM IN NEW ZEALAND.

THE Board appointed to report on the Volunteer system at present obtaining in New Zealand met, in obedience to the request of the Hon. the Defence Minister, on the 1st March, 1882, at the Government Buildings, Wellington, the under-mentioned members being present: Major-General A. G. Davidson, president; Major A. Lean, Major A. Pitt, Captain E. Hamlin, M.H.R., and Captain A. Crowe, members. The Board express regret at the absence of certain gentlemen who were unable to make it convenient to accede to the request of the Hon. the Defence Minister that they should sit as members.

It is not considered necessary by the Board to enter into any long detail of reasons calling for reorganization of the present force, as the action of the Government in having called them together for the purpose of recommending rules and regulations for a reorganization is *de facto* proof of the necessity existing; but, as the Board have not, with one exception, taken any evidence, they consider it due to the Hon. the Defence Minister and to themselves to explain the basis of their mode of proceeding. The defects and deficiencies of the present organization are patent, for they have all been pointed out, more or less, by the different officers who have been appointed to inspect and report upon the force for several years past, and all these reports have been before the Board.

The President of the Board inspected and reported upon that portion of the force located in the South Island two years ago; also the Defence Office, previously to the assembling of the Board, called upon officers commanding districts in both Islands to submit their own views, and obtain the views of such of the officers serving under their command as were desirous of expressing any opinions.

Thus the Board have had before them a large number of very valuable reports dealing with present defects, and suggesting improvements, all of which have been taken into careful consideration. There has been a very full representation of the views of officers from all parts of the colony under review.

The Board have also had before them, and have gone minutely into, the latest regulations (1881) for the Volunteer Force in England; also full reports and details of the latest systems adopted in New South Wales, Victoria, South and Western Australia, and Tasmania; and it is from all this information, combined with the local knowledge that the several members of the Board have been able to bring to the consideration of the subject, that they now submit in detail their recommendations upon the various points that they have dealt with. The Board desire to point out that their recommendations deal with the subject as one distinctly apart from, although in support of, the scheme for fortification and torpedo defences, and the permanent force consequent on its adoption, as proposed by Colonel Scratchley.

DISBANDMENT OF PRESENT FORCE.

From a certain date, to be fixed by Proclamation of His Excellency the Governor, the present Volunteer Force should be disbanded, and the commissions of officers remain in abeyance. The services of any Volunteers already serving would be continued, provided their services are again tendered under the new Act and in accordance with regulations issued under its authority, within a certain date, also to be fixed by the Governor under Proclamation.

In order to avoid the shock or disembodiment which a Proclamation of disbandment on a given day would probably bring about, the Board recommend that the last part of clause 3 of the Volunteer Act of South Australia, 1865-66, shall be introduced in the Act, which, in the event of the scheme proposed by the Board being adopted by the Government, must be drawn and become law in order to bring the new regulations into force. By this clause Volunteers will be able to enter under the new regulations prior to the extinction of the companies now existing.

CAPITATION AS HERETOFORE TO BE GRANTED FOR CURRENT YEAR.

For the present year it is hardly possible that any changes can be made, but, if the recommendations of the Board meet with approval, they would hope that in the meantime all arrangements might be made so as to enable the new organization to come into force on the 1st January, 1883. For the current year pay and special allowances should be granted as at present; but, as the collection of the arms and accoutrements may be attended with some difficulty, it should be made known that no money will be granted in cases where arms and accoutrements are not punctually delivered in.