

ports little liable to attack. These colonies will doubtless desire that solid guarantees for future security should be taken, and it is evidently essential to success in this sense that their land forces should be organized on a common basis so as to be capable of being brought together for concerted action. The possibility of being able to take a vigorous offensive at the outset of war against points which might subsequently prove menacing would be a strategic advantage of the first importance.

For the above reasons the Colonial Defence Committee, while differing from the line of argument followed by Major-General Edwards, concur generally in the strength of the forces he lays down.

As regards the standard of coast armaments, the conditions above laid down supply a definite basis. For the purpose of dealing with the class of vessels which alone will be found in Australasian waters, the 6-inch gun will amply suffice, and by its great handiness and speed of fire will prove more effective than the heavier natures. The cost of armaments and emplacements rapidly rises as calibres increase, and by restricting the size of their guns in future the colonies will secure economy, efficiency, and simplicity at the same time.

The most important question with which the colonies have to deal is that of organization, and the Colonial Defence Committee concur with Major-General Edwards in considering that the brigade unit is most suitable. They are, however, of opinion that the population basis cannot well be adopted as fixing the relative strength of the forces of individual colonies, and that, as regards New South Wales and Victoria, it will suffice for present requirements if each of those colonies furnishes two brigades.

The basis of the organization should be a nucleus of permanent troops and a "partially-paid" force, capable of expansion, and it appears most desirable that the conditions of service and training, and, if it can be arranged, the rates of pay, should be common to all the colonies, and that the same general standard of efficiency should be maintained. The principle of a small cadre battalion proposed by Major-General Edwards appears sound; but the Colonial Defence Committee are unable to regard the rifle companies as at present fulfilling the conditions of a reserve; for, while it is undoubtedly most desirable to encourage proficiency in rifle-shooting by means of these companies, they appear in some cases to be only private associations assisted by the Colonial Governments, and not under a general obligation to serve in the ranks in case of need. It would be a doubtful expedient to flood the small battalions with untrained men at the outset of war, and rifle companies can only be looked upon as a practicable reserve on condition of receiving some drill and training, possessing uniforms, and being accustomed to discipline.

It is, therefore, for serious consideration whether a real reserve could not be formed of men who have passed through the ranks of the partially-paid forces, and might receive a small retaining fee;* or whether the organization of the rifle companies could be placed on a partially military basis.

The amalgamation of the artillery and submarine mining services appears desirable in principle, if difficulties arising from differences in rates of pay, &c., can be overcome; but "Australian Coast Corps" would seem a more desirable designation than "Fortress Corps" in the case of a portion of the Empire where fortresses are not required and could not under any circumstances be maintained.

The Colonial Defence Committee consider that all the mounted forces should be organised and trained as mounted infantry. Cavalry, in the European sense, are not required to meet the probable conditions under which any Australian force would be employed.

The general assimilation of uniform, as proposed by Major-General Edwards, is most desirable, and a service-dress should be adopted. The decision as to pattern is a matter for joint consideration; but the Colonial Defence Committee agree with Major-General Edwards in deprecating the choice of red as the colour. The adoption of smokeless powder, which will certainly shortly take place, renders it more than ever necessary that troops should not be clothed in a dress of conspicuous colour.

The provision of a joint Colonial Military College would be a great advantage, as pointed out by the Royal Commission of 1882. Such an institution would promote uniformity of training, and would serve to focus problems of colonial defence, and lead discussion into proper channels.

Turning to the specific recommendations made by Major-General Edwards in regard to individual colonies, the Colonial Defence Committee desire to offer a few remarks in certain cases.

New Zealand.

The Colonial Defence Committee have dealt with the defence of New Zealand in their remarks of the 10th April, 1888, upon Major-General Schaw's report. While generally concurring in Major-General Edwards's recommendations, they deprecate the transference of more than half the naval artillery to the rifle companies. The naval artillery appears, judging from its numbers, to be a popular force in the colony, and any reduction should be very gradual. It would be advisable to introduce the partially-paid system, as calculated to give a higher standard of efficiency than is provided by a purely Volunteer force. On account of the distance (1,200 miles) which separates New Zealand from continental Australia, the Colonial Defence Committee consider that the defence of New Zealand must be dealt with independently, and they doubt whether any advantage would be gained by amalgamating the Permanent Artillery and Submarine Mining Force of this colony with those of the remaining colonies. They are of opinion that it is desirable to provide a better infantry weapon than the Snider, but they consider that a total stand of 8,000, in place of the 16,000 recommended, would amply suffice.

* Such a reserve has already been established in Victoria, but does not at present appear to be entirely successful.