

a gunner to keep himself efficient as a specialist. As there are rarely likely to be vacancies in the non-commissioned-officer rank, the prospects of promotion are not great. All the first-class gunners should be specialists, liable to be reduced in rank if they do not keep themselves well up in their work. It is on these specialists that the efficient working of the forts very largely depends, and every inducement should be given to them to keep themselves efficient.

In No. 2 Company we have a very serious dearth of tradesmen such as electricians, engine-drivers, carpenters, and blacksmiths. It is essential for the efficient carrying out of the submarine mining work and the care and up-keep of the various stores and engines that we should have a sufficiency of such tradesmen. The present rate of pay seems too low to attract men of good capabilities to the ranks, and steps should be taken at the very earliest opportunity to remedy the present state of affairs.

I recommend that as suggested for No. 1 Company the rank of first-class gunner should be kept for men who qualify themselves as specialists, and that a man should be liable to be reduced in pay if he does not keep himself up in his work.

The Government of New South Wales invited this Colony to send any officers or non-commissioned officers of the artillery branch of the Permanent Force to undergo a course of instruction lasting for about three months in Sydney. I recommended that advantage should be taken of this offer, and am sure had this been carried out that the men would have got very valuable instruction at a small cost, and that money so spent would have been of benefit to the colony. Unfortunately my recommendation was declined. Should a similar offer be made at any future time I hope that the authorities will see their way to take advantage of it.

Owing to the installation of a new mine-field and increased electric-light plant, it will be absolutely necessary to make a slight increase to No. 2 Company, which I have asked for in the estimates.

The name of "Gunner" is not suitable to a man doing entirely submarine-mining work, and the men of No. 2 Service Company should be designated "Sappers," and not "Gunnery."

My recommendation that a fixed rule should be laid down as to the number of married men to be allowed in each company has not been acted on, and men are practically allowed to marry as they please, and in some cases they have been enrolled when already married. This militates very much against discipline. The married men live out of barracks, and the majority of the non-commissioned officers, being also married, live out of barracks too. I would suggest that at the four centres where the Permanent Force is quartered the Government should take upon themselves the duty of erecting married quarters in close proximity to the barracks. A small rent should be charged for these quarters sufficient to repay the Government proper interest on their outlay, and to provide a small sinking sum for necessary repairs. These quarters should be apportioned to the married non-commissioned officers and men, who should be under the same discipline as the single men living in barracks. In Wellington, where house-rent is so high, this would be a decided boon to the married men of the Force. All the non-commissioned officers and men would always be get-at-able in case their services were required at any time.

The number of married men in the Force is at present :—

No. 1 Company	...	...	...	...	79 out of a total of 218.
No. 2 Company	...	...	...	...	29 " 68.

Artificers.

I have submitted a proposal for increasing the pay and improving the position of the artificers of No. 1 Company, for inclusion in the estimates.

My suggestions as regards the supply of qualified artillery instructors have been carried out. Master-Gunner Richardson's time has been extended for another three years in the colony. Sergeant-Major Burberry is Artillery Instructor for the South Island, and another Artillery Instructor from the Imperial service has just arrived in the colony for Auckland.

The Volunteer Artillery corps will not have any ground for complaint of the want of proper instruction, and I trust these non-commissioned officers will not only raise the standard of usefulness of the Artillery Volunteers, but also materially increase the efficiency of the No. 1 Company of the Permanent Force.

Reserve.

No steps have yet been taken for providing a reserve for the Permanent Force. At present men enlist in the Force for no specified time, and are sworn in to serve in the Defence Force until lawfully discharged. As a matter of fact, a man's discharge is never refused whenever he likes to ask for it. As a rule a man asks for his discharge on the grounds of his wishing to better his position by returning to civil life. The man leaves the Force, and all his military training is lost to the country. I strongly urge that regulations should be laid down as to the length of time a man should serve with the colours and with the reserve.

The men of No. 2 Company who have joined and been taught a trade in the company should not be allowed to leave until they have completed a certain term of engagement, except by purchasing their discharge for a sum varying according to the length of the man's service.

Police Duty.

During the present year very few men have been called upon to perform duties in the streets as policemen, and I trust that unless actually called out in aid of the Civil power, they may never have to perform such duties in future, and that the police and military Forces will be entirely separated.

No men from the Police Force have been trained in the Forts for the past two years, and the police cannot be seriously considered as an efficient military reserve in case of war.