

reality to such training by getting together a sufficient number of men to let the drills be done thoroughly. Men will understand the drill better, enter into it more zealously, and see the necessity of working together, taking advantage of cover, &c., much more readily, when there are sufficient numbers present, rather than when one man has to represent a section, and the work has to be done by a skeleton Force.

If I found that a company was taking the matter up seriously, and was doing its best to improve and become efficient, I would have no hesitation in recommending that either the whole half-crown, or a portion of it, be paid to the men, although the company had not turned out quite up to the strength required by the regulations.

I trust, now that the Government has seen its way to provide the money for these extra parades, that the employers of labour in the colony will co-operate and do all they can, compatibly with their business arrangements, to allow their men to take advantage of the parades. Their success depends very largely on employers granting Volunteers in their employ some slight concessions, and, as the Volunteers work entirely for the protection of the employer's property in time of war, I trust that we will be met in a liberal spirit. I am glad to say that within the last four months two large firms, one in Auckland and one in Dunedin, have come forward and allowed corps to be formed exclusively from their employes, and, as the men in these companies will all be able to get away on the same day, I have no doubt but that the companies so formed will soon turn out smart and efficient.

Should these daylight parades prove a success this year, I hope that the full number I asked for (twelve) will be granted next year. I am sure that the money given to improve the efficiency of the force in field training and outdoor work will be money well expended.

The great weakness of the Volunteer Force lies in its officers and non-commissioned officers. So long as the power of election of officers remains with the men, so long will the Volunteers be inefficient from a military point of view. As matters at present exist, an officer is dependent for his position on the will of the men, and he is loth to do anything at all contrary to the feelings of the men; the consequence being a very slack state of affairs and a sad want of discipline, which would militate very seriously against efficiency should active operations have to be taken. The officers are, as a rule, keen to learn, but have few opportunities of perfecting themselves in the higher branches of the military profession. It is the non-commissioned officers, however, who are the great blot on the Volunteer Force. In the large majority of the companies I have inspected, I have had serious fault to find with the non-commissioned officers. Making large allowances for nervousness and what is called "inspection fever," I rarely find that beyond knowing the manual and firing exercises, and in some cases the bayonet exercise and physical drills, the non-commissioned officers are able to efficiently instruct their men. The drills and exercises I have enumerated are the least practical parts of a Volunteer's work, and in many districts of the colony prize competitions are held in them; and it is for this reason, I presume, that the non-commissioned officers take so much interest in them. I should be extremely glad if, as a body, they would take as much interest in the practical and useful part of their work. The non-commissioned officers should be the backbone of the company, thoroughly up in all drills and capable of imparting instruction both to the recruit and the company; they should not permit mistakes to pass without notice when drilling their men. As a rule, they seem to be either afraid to correct the men or to be too ignorant to do so; they do not inspire the respect among the men which they ought to, and as a body are capable of vast improvement.

I have lately issued orders that in all the centres classes of instruction are to be held for both officers and non-commissioned officers, and all the junior officers and non-commissioned officers are to be given frequent opportunities of drilling their companies, and when an instructor is not present that the non-commissioned officers, for a portion of the time at drill, are to drill their own sections under the supervision of the officers.

During the last few months there has been a great revival of Volunteering throughout the colony. Since my arrival seventy-one corps have proffered their services to the Government, and the majority of these offers have come in since the commencement of this year.

I have only recommended the acceptance of the services of companies at head-quarters of districts or in stations closely connected by rail or boat with those in which corps already exist, so that no difficulty should be experienced in getting companies together for daylight drills, and that mobilisation for service could be carried out in the most expeditious manner. Each of the four centres now has its own town battalion; the companies comprising the battalion can be mobilised in a few hours, and marched at once to their positions under the defence scheme. The companies of the country battalions, being all on the line of rail or boat communication, could all be mobilised and in their position within twenty-four hours.

ENGINEER COMPANIES.

Provision has been made for an Engineer Corps to be formed in each of the four principal districts. Corps have existed for some time past in Christchurch and Dunedin. So far I have been unable to form them in Auckland and Wellington. A scale of equipment has been laid down for such corps, and orders are being sent Home for part of the equipment this year, to be completed in the following year. These corps will be available for telephone, signalling, and telegraph work, and for carrying out simple field engineering, and I hope the establishment of the four corps will soon be completed.

CYCLE CORPS.

Sanction has been given to the formation of a Cycle Corps, consisting of two officers and twenty-five non-commissioned officers and men, at each of the four centres. Corps already exist at Wellington, Dunedin, and Christchurch, and I hope soon to get the offer of a corps from Auckland.