

in some cases had to leave again so as to be in time for their work on Monday morning, and by Monday evening all the camps were broken up. This practically only gives two days for work, and it is for serious consideration whether these two days' drill are worth the expense entailed—£3,000. I found, with the Wellington camp, that the men were just beginning to settle down, and to find some reality in their training; by the time they had to go away. If I could have kept them another four or five days, I am sure every corps would have greatly benefited by the extended training. The difference between Home and Colonial volunteering is, I know, very great; but in England, where men are worse paid, have fewer holidays, and much less leisure than they have in the colony, a large number of the Volunteer Corps manage to go out for a whole week's training to some place quite apart from their stations. I should very much like, next year, to attempt to get a portion or the whole of the Volunteers out at Easter, or any convenient season, for a whole week's training. The great difficulty, of course, lies in the unwillingness or inability of the employers of labour to give the men in their employ any special facilities for attending camps at a distance from their own homes.

It is essential that at some time the troops in each district should be drilled in the parts they will be called upon to fill in the defence scheme, and to occupy the positions they will be called upon to take up on active service. The more practice they get, the more available will they become in case of actual war. The positions around the coasts are so extended, that with only two available days it would be impossible for the troops to be drilled in all the likely schemes. No doubt, for the extra three or four days in camp the Government would have to give some extra remuneration, but, as I have already stated, any expenditure on field training is money spent in the right direction.

UNIFORMS.

The position of the uniform question in the colony is in a most unsatisfactory and unsoldier-like condition. In my last report I recommended that the corps in the Auckland District and the Mounted Corps of the colony who required a new uniform should adopt the kharkee uniform, the remainder of the troops being dressed as laid down by the Volunteer Conference of 1894. This would not have interfered with the clothing of the majority of the troops in the same style, and would have given the Mounted Corps and the Auckland District a distinctly serviceable fighting dress. My recommendations were not accepted, and the order was given that all corps without exception in the colony were to be allowed to dress as they pleased. This order is a severe blow to discipline and proper organisation, and has not tended in any way to increase the efficiency of the service. It was brought about, I understand, by the discontent of one or two corps, or rather perhaps by a few members of these corps, and is deprecated by all Volunteers having the interests of the service at heart. The majority of the Volunteer corps in both the Wellington District and South Island had provided themselves with uniforms in accordance with the recommendations of the Volunteer Conference of 1894, and these corps now feel it a grievance that they should have been put to the expense of having to provide themselves with this uniform, when, if they had waited a short time, they might have pleased themselves as their mode of dress. I further urged that, whilst permitting the choice of uniforms to battalions, it should be insisted upon that all the companies in the battalion should be dressed alike. This was not agreed to, and now we have the absurd sight of a battalion in which may be mixed several kinds of uniform, including naval uniforms. The only good I can see in this is to deceive an enemy, by showing him a large variety of uniforms, into thinking that he has a considerable force opposed to him. It is against all soldierly customs and traditions, and militates greatly against giving reality to the battalion system.

The Conference of 1894 decided that belts and accoutrements should be of brown leather, and no alteration, as far as I know, has been made in this decision, but unfortunately there are no brown belts in store, nor, as far as I know, have any been ordered. We have a large stock of white buff belts in store, and I am trying to see if we can get these dyed a suitable brown colour. If the experiments are successful, then all the buff belts throughout the colony should be dyed a uniform colour. This also applies to pouches, frogs, and slings. Many of the companies have old black belts, old brown belts, with mixtures of different classes of buckles. A sufficient supply of serviceable belts should be ordered to equip all companies alike.

A dress should be laid down for the staff officers of battalions, but with the multiplicity of uniforms existing in a battalion it would be rather hard to combine part of each uniform into the staff officers' dress. Perhaps it might be considered advisable to allow these officers to dress as they please. Practically now there are no dress regulations at all.

My recommendation that an allowance should be made to corps for the supply of great-coats has not been entertained, and I can only point out that without great-coats a corps is not fit to take the field.

The Government have decided to make a free issue of water-bottles and haversacks, and this will be carried out on receipt of the stores from England.

To obtain some uniformity in the matter of dress, I would suggest that it is advisable the Government should take the clothing of the troops into its hands. The capitation allowance at present is £2 10s. per head annually, out of which amount a corps is supposed to put aside £1 5s. for the purchase and up-keep of uniforms.

I recommend that in future the capitation allowance be reduced to £1 5s., the Government undertaking to supply all corps with uniforms of a service pattern, the uniforms to be renewed every three years, and at the expiration of that time to become the property of the corps. This would do away with the hardship now experienced by new corps on formation having either to borrow money or get credit from the tailor for the supply of uniforms.

ORGANIZATION OF MILITARY DISTRICTS.

The districts are now organized as follows:—Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury, Otago, and Nelson. During the past year the sub-districts of North Otago and Southland have been incorporated into the Otago District. The Sub-Commanders at Oamaru and Invercargill having been retained were placed under the direct command of the officer commanding the Otago District, and to each of these sub-commands has been allotted a half-battalion of the country battalion of infantry.