

At present the officer commanding each district has, with the exception of the Auckland and Nelson Districts, no paid officer to help him in carrying out the work of administration of his district. Commanding Officers are frequently absent on duty in various parts of their command, and the large amount of clerical work at their head-quarters has to stand over till their return. This is an unsound principle causing great delay, and, in many cases, considerable inconvenience. Each District Commanding Officer should have an Adjutant to assist him in carrying out the duties of his district, so that when he was away from head-quarters routine work would not suffer, and he could send this officer away as often as he considered necessary to carry out inspections and instruction among the country corps. I have recommended that such an officer as Adjutant should be appointed to each district, and that the three officers required for Wellington, Canterbury, and Otago should be obtained from the Imperial service. These officers should have Hythe certificates of musketry, and have been through the mounted-infantry course at Aldershot.

The Auckland District already possesses an Adjutant, but when his term of service expires he should be replaced by an officer from the Imperial service. The Nelson District having only a few corps in it could remain as at present. In addition to the Adjutant each battalion in the district should have a paid Sergeant-Instructor, and each officer commanding a district should have a paid Sergeant-Instructor on his staff. To necessitate this plan being carried out, and to replace men at present doing Instructors' work who are either incompetent or past their work, it will be necessary to obtain eight Instructors from the Imperial service. These men would cost but little more than men engaged locally. They should be young men, unmarried, smart, and thoroughly up in the latest drills; and I cannot too strongly urge that steps should be taken to procure such men at the very earliest date. The Volunteer Force throughout the colony suffers for want of proper instruction. In the Auckland District, for instance, where there are sixteen companies of infantry, we have only one Instructor. I have been approached in that district, on more than one occasion, as to whether the different corps might not combine together to hire an Instructor, so necessary do they feel it to be for their well-being that they should receive proper instruction, but I hold that it is the duty of the Government to supply this instruction; at the same time I admire the zeal of the Volunteers in their desire to make themselves efficient.

Work is too much centralised in the Defence Office at Wellington. Officers commanding districts are not allowed anything like as free a hand as they should be. For the very slightest expenditure, or for the issue of a single railway-pass, they have to apply for official sanction to headquarters. Commanding Officers should be allowed a certain discretion in the issue of railway-passes in their districts, and a small sum—say, £25 annually—should be allowed them for contingent and urgent expenses. They should furnish an account of this sum, and also of the number of railway-passes issued quarterly, to the Defence Office. If Commanding Officers are not to be trusted to act honestly and with discretion in small matters of this sort, they are not fit for their positions, and should not be appointed.

The pay of the Commanding Officers is inadequate for the position they occupy and the responsibility that rests on them. They only draw the same rate of house-allowance as a Sergeant-Instructor.

SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION.

In my last report I strongly advised that a School of Instruction should be formed at Wellington for the Volunteer Force, but no money has been taken up in the estimates to carry out this service. I find among the Volunteers a general desire to benefit by any instruction that can be provided for them, and I have been asked several times lately, in different parts of the country, if it would not be possible to form a school on the lines I have already indicated. I have no doubt, if such a school were formed, that very many officers and non-commissioned officers of the Force would only be too willing to attend, provided they got slight assistance from the Government. I would suggest that the travelling-expenses of any Volunteers wishing to attend these schools should be paid by the Government; that non-commissioned officers and men should be given accommodation in barracks and free rations whilst so attending; officers to be given free passages, and the recognised travelling-allowance for their rank whilst actually under instruction; four courses, of three weeks' or a month's duration, might be held during the year: these courses would be thoroughly practical, in addition to lectures on the higher branches of the soldier's profession. Everybody passing through the school would be granted a certificate of proficiency. I am convinced that such an institution would be of the greatest benefit to the Force. At present there are no means of imparting instruction in anything but drill-hall work; and if we are to keep up the newly-authorised establishment we must lay ourselves out to interest the men in their work, and instruct a few thoroughly, who in their turn should be able, on return to their corps, to impart efficient instruction.

GYMNASIUMS AND ARMOURIES.

I have recommended that in the four centres a certain sum should be taken up in the estimates for the provision of gymnasiums and armouries. Physical and gymnastic instruction is a most important feature in military training. It improves the physique of the men in every way, hardens their muscles, and enables them to bear fatigue. It must be remembered that the Volunteer movement in the large towns has to compete with the various amusements of cricket, football, cycling, &c.; and the more we can make the Volunteer service attractive, the more likely are we to get recruits, and those of a good stamp. In each of the centres I hope there will be, before long, regular Volunteer gymnastic, football, cycling clubs, &c., and that the Volunteers will take a prominent and successful part in athletics of all descriptions.

As regards the necessity for armouries, I would urge that it would be economy on the part of the Government to provide suitable buildings as adjuncts of the drill-halls. The Forces are about to be rearmed with the new rifle, which requires, perhaps, more care than the old Martini rifle; and the provision of armouries, where a man could be told-off to take charge of the arms and keep them clean, would insure the certainty of their always being in a fit and proper state for immediate use when required. Any damage or neglect of the arms by a Volunteer would be at once discovered and traced to the person causing such damage. In some few of the country stations the