

REPORT.

THE Joint Defence (Secret) Committee of both Houses of Parliament, to whom was referred all matters affecting defence, with power to call for persons, papers, and records, and to whom was referred the statement made in the House of Representatives on the 20th July, 1900, by the Right Hon. R. J. Seddon, Premier and Minister of Defence, respecting harbour defences, colonial Defence Forces, Imperial Reserve, cadet corps, rifle clubs, and other matters connected with the defences of the colony, have the honour to report that they have carefully considered the said statement, and have taken the evidence of the following witnesses thereon:—

His Excellency the Admiral commanding the Australian Naval Station (by written questions submitted and answered in writing).

The Right Hon. R. J. Seddon, Premier and Defence Minister.

Colonel A. P. Penton, Commander of the Forces.

Major Sir Arthur Douglas, Bart., Under-Secretary for Defence.

Mr. A. C. Whitney, manager at Auckland and attorney for the Colonial Ammunition Company (Limited).

Captain John Falconer, in charge of No. 2 Service Company at Wellington.

Mr. J. H. Witheford, M.H.R., Chairman, Auckland Harbour Board.

Surgeon-General the Hon. M. S. Grace, C.M.G.

Captain W. J. Napier, M.H.R., Captain, Devonport Coast Guard Artillery Volunteers.

Lieut.-Colonel White, commanding No. 1 Battalion, Auckland Infantry.

Captain Coyle, No. 2 Service Company, Auckland.

The Committee have had before them a number of important documents and records relative to Colonial Defence, and after consideration of the evidence before them have the honour to report as follows:—

FORTIFICATIONS AND MINE-FIELDS.

1. Your Committee are of opinion that it is necessary that the fortifications and harbour defences of the colony should be perfected, extended, and strengthened.

2. Your Committee, having regard to the fact of Auckland possessing the Calliope Dock, and having regard also to the fact of arrangements existing between the Admiralty authorities and the Auckland Harbour Board in reference to that dock for the procurement and maintenance of the necessary machinery and equipment of the dock, consider that it is of the first importance that the defences of the Port of Auckland, both as regards fortifications, submarine mines, and the necessary Permanent and Volunteer Forces, should be completed without delay.

3. Your Committee are of opinion that the necessary quick-firing guns of the latest pattern and requisite calibre should be obtained for use at Auckland.

4. Your Committee consider that a sufficient stock of Westport coal should be always kept at Auckland for the use of Her Majesty's warships, the supply of coal to be maintained by being replenished from time to time, proper financial arrangements being made between the Imperial and New Zealand Governments in reference to such stock of coal.

5. Your Committee are of opinion that additional fortifications, guns of more modern types, and quick-firing guns are required for the complete fortification of Wellington. The mine-fields at Wellington require strengthening, and additional men to man and support the forts are needed.

6. Your Committee are further of opinion that the fortifications for the defence of Lyttelton require to be altered as regards the position of the guns (the guns at Ripa Island should be removed to the Heads), and by the introduction of the necessary quick-firing guns and completion of the mine-fields. Also that additional men are required to man and support the harbour defences.

7. Your Committee consider that the defences of Port Chalmers should be strengthened by the completion of the mine-field and necessary adjuncts, and by the addition of suitable guns.

8. Your Committee, having regard to the great importance of the Westport coalfields, especially in time of war, and having regard also to the opinions with which they have been favoured by His Excellency the Admiral commanding the Australian Naval Station in respect of the necessity for fortifying Westport, are of opinion that the fortifications recommended by His Excellency should be undertaken and completed without delay.

9. Your Committee are of opinion that the necessary steam-launches (or miners) and pinnaces in connection with the several fortified ports in the colony should be procured, and be of an up-to-date class.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS.

10. Your Committee further make the following recommendations:—

- (a.) That an ample supply of ammunition for the guns in the forts, and the requisite stores for the mine-fields and spare parts of the mechanism of the guns, be obtained and always maintained.
- (b.) That the Volunteer Force of the colony be increased up to a minimum strength of all arms and ranks of 18,000, as mentioned in the interim report of your Committee.
- (c.) That the field artillery of the colony be strengthened by obtaining three batteries (of newest type of guns) in addition to the field guns at present in the colony.
- (d.) That eight Maxim guns of the latest approved pattern, together with the necessary ammunition, be obtained.