

38. DETENTION AND ALTERNATIVE SERVICE.

The Parliamentary Joint Defence Legislation Committee reported in December, 1913, as follows:—

“1. *Conscientious Objectors*.—The Committee recommends the Government to consider the advisability of placing religious and conscientious objectors on the same footing, and of allowing exemption from military service to both these classes of objectors, on their application to a Magistrate, provided that they agree to give adequate alternative service.

“2. *Alternative Service*.—The Committee is of opinion—

“(a.) That the supervision and the control of such alternative service should be by the Civil authorities.

“(b.) That such alternative service should, in point of time and personal attendance, be equivalent, as nearly as possible, to the compulsory military service required under the Defence Act.

“(c.) That persons rendering alternative service which involves their going into camp or residing away from home for any period should receive remuneration as nearly as possible equivalent to the amount payable for a like period in camp under compulsory military service.

“(d.) That such alternative service should take the form of some work for the public benefit.

“3. *Punishment*.—The Committee recommends that persons failing to render military service or alternative service (as the case may be), or who commit any breach of the Defence Act or of regulations made thereunder (except breaches in the course of the actual performance of military duties), should be dealt with and be punished by the Civil Courts.”

Consequent upon the adoption of paragraph 3 of the Joint Committee's report, recourse to “detention” will become very rare, as offences by those actually performing military duties are exceptional, it being chiefly those who have declined or neglected to perform their statutory obligation who have in the past been committed to detention. If the recommendation of the Committee were given effect to it would result in a welcome relief to the Defence authorities from the irksome task of carrying out the penal provisions of the Defence Act, and would enable the officers and non-commissioned officers of the R.N.Z.A., who are highly trained specialists, to carry out these normal duties for which they receive pay from the State.

Great credit is due to these officers and non-commissioned officers for their firm and tactful handling of those committed to their charge. The result has been that some of the latter have realized the error of their ways. Nevertheless I am strongly of opinion that sentences of detention should be restricted to military offences committed on duty.

The number placed in detention during the period (twelve months) from 1st May, 1913, to 30th April, 1914, is 234. Twenty-nine were committed twice, six three times, and four four times.

39. COURTS-MARTIAL.

Only three Courts-martial (one on a Territorial soldier) have been held during the past year. I am glad to say that it is now coming to be generally recognized that the machinery of the Civil law is that which should, as a rule, in the case of Territorials, be invoked for dealing with cases of breach of the Defence Act.

40. THE AREA SYSTEM.

Valuable work has been done during the past year by the area group officers. Efforts have been successfully made to secure a system of uniformity in these offices throughout the Dominion, and a further endeavour has been made to reduce clerical work, and thus enable officers and Permanent Staff to devote more time to instruction.

The necessity for a board of group officers to sit periodically for the purpose of improving the area group administration is recognized, and this will be done at least once annually.

The Inspector-General commended the “record office” (area group) system in vogue in New Zealand as being applicable alike to peace or war conditions, and made some valuable suggestions for its further development on the lines hitherto followed.

41. MEDICAL EXAMINATION.

The medical examinations were carried out on the same lines as in previous years. The result of them will be found in the report of the Director of Medical Services (Appendix H).

42. REGISTRATION.

The gross accumulated total numbers registered since the inception of the scheme of universal training up to the 30th April, 1914, is as follows:—

District.	Territorials.	Senior Cadets.	Totals.
Auckland	9,254	11,502	20,756
Canterbury	6,274	12,670	18,944
Otago	6,228	8,779	15,007
Wellington	8,356	15,272	23,628
Totals	30,112	48,223	78,335