

the undivided duties of General Officers Commanding-in-Chief." Experience has since thoroughly borne out this dictum. As a rule the born leader of men, assuming he has time for administrative detail, has little aptitude for it. Even in a professional army, where men devote their whole lives to military work, specialization in all matters pertaining to the art of war, and to troop training, has, under modern conditions, proved to be necessary. How much more, then, must be it necessary under a Militia system!

Specialization necessary.

79. Equally vital to a Militia army, is the specialization of the military administrator. Whether he be a distinguished leader or deeply versed in the science of strategy are minor considerations. Good business aptitude and business training are the real qualifications, when they can be found coupled with just so much military knowledge as to enable their possessor to meet military demands with intelligence and sympathy. The supply of such men in a Militia army will never equal the war demand, unless the principle of specialization is applied in peace so that a certain number of them are gradually evolved by normal processes.

Need for the Business Man.

80. On purely military grounds, the maintenance of a clear line of demarcation between the fighting soldier on the one hand and the military administrator on the other, and the specialization of either for his particular work, can be defended and advocated. Put responsibility for accurate accounts and for war efficiency on the same individual, he is bound to neglect his men and play up to the £ s. d. If he fails in training he may never be found out: if he goes wrong over his accounts he is certain to go to the wall.

As a business proposition, too, the need is obvious for specialized training for the man who has himself to carry out important commercial transactions in peace and war, and has to gauge and report on the capabilities of his business subordinates.

There is further an important political aspect to this question. Neither Parliament nor the Treasury, nor, in fact, the common-sense of the nation, would tolerate any real and wide measure of decentralization in financial matters being effected unless they were convinced that the man to whom it is proposed to delegate the necessary powers would have both time and business capacity to make the scheme a success. This condition alone is sufficient to preclude the delegation of any wide financial powers to commanders of troops who are not business experts, and who ought to devote the best part of their time to the preparation of their commands for war.

For military reasons, then, as well as on commercial and political grounds, the men who are to conduct the financial business transactions of an army should be trained to the work from the start, and it is as business men that they should hope to rise in their profession.

Decentralization impossible without a Change.

98. Finally, I would say that in the foregoing paragraphs of this chapter are embodied my response to the District Commandants who have, during my inspections, with one accord, begged me to endeavour to devise a method of relieving them from the harassing burden of administrative responsibility now resting on their shoulders. Each of them in turn has pointed out to me that the mass of detail he has to attend to, in co-ordinating the work of the big administrative sections, makes undue inroads on his time, and that his touch with the troops, as well as with the training and military instruction of young officers, suffers sadly in consequence. I have done my best, and I myself at least am firmly of the opinion that only on the lines I have indicated can any hope of real relief be reasonably expected.

Actual decentralization it is not within my power to guarantee. That must rest with the departmental chiefs at Headquarters, and it will of necessity be a gradual process. All I can attempt to do is to devise a system which will render possible a real measure of decentralization without at the same time overwhelming commanders of troops with a mass of detail. I earnestly hope that the necessary machinery will be instituted at an early date, and that subsequently the members of the Military Board, individually and collectively, will see to it that District Offices shall become something more than mere post-offices for correspondence from units and areas to the Department at Melbourne.

APPENDIX VII.

FORMATION OF A MILITARY BUSINESS BRANCH.

(Extract from the Report on the Australian Military Forces by the Inspector-General of the Oversea Forces, 1914.)

A Military Business Department.

81. Australian conditions being what they are, I have no hesitation in advising that the institution of a business department in the Army, under a business head, is essential to efficiency and economy. The personnel of this department should be homogeneous and interchangeable as between the various sections into which the department should be divided. In this way only will it be possible to produce, in time, men fitted to be placed in charge of administration in all its branches, both in districts and at Headquarters.