

1916.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEFENCE FORCES OF NEW ZEALAND.

REPORT OF THE GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING THE FORCES
FROM 26TH JUNE, 1915, TO 31ST MAY, 1916.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

SIR,— Department of Defence, Headquarters Office, Wellington, 31st May, 1916.

I have the honour herewith to submit the annual report on the Defence Forces. The report covers the period from the date of last year's report to date.

The early meeting of Parliament renders it impossible to supply complete returns and comparisons, the military training year not closing until the 31st May, with possible extension this year into June.

The work of the Department has steadily increased. Additional units have been added to the original Expeditionary Force, and continual and ample reinforcements have been regularly despatched without a hitch or serious accident. This is the more creditable owing to the fact that the Department, in the absence of a naval administration, assumed the function of fitting, equipping, and maintaining a regular troop-transport system from this the most remote dominion of the Empire.

It is satisfactory to know that the new units and reinforcements have met with general approval by the Army Council and the Imperial Training Staff at the base in Egypt as regards their physique and training.

As a natural result of active service abroad sick and wounded invalided soldiers have been regularly returning to the Dominion. The arrangements for their reception and care have been carefully and well carried out by the Defence Medical Service and Public Health Departments working in conjunction.

Concurrently with the strain of training and forwarding regular reinforcements, the Territorial or home-defence training-system has been carried out. Without the Territorial system adopted by Parliament in 1909 it is certain that the Expeditionary Force despatched to occupy Samoa, the Main Force, and reinforcements could not have been so efficiently and expeditiously despatched and maintained. It is to the credit of the commercial, pastoral, and farming industries of the Dominion that, despite the strain of enlistment for service abroad, they have so well supported the annual training of the Territorial Forces during this time of stress. The discipline at these Territorial training-camps has been very good indeed.

During the past year a Minister of Supplies and Munitions, with a Board of Advice, has been appointed with very satisfactory results in the co-ordination of manufactures and supplies throughout the Dominion, thus ensuring improvements, and sufficiency of equipment to meet urgent military demands.

The Dominion has been most fortunate in securing the services of Surgeon-General R. S. Henderson, M.B., K.H.P., as Director-General of Medical Services to organize the Medical Services, and this has been carried out with excellent results.

The establishment of a Discharged Soldiers' Employment Bureau under the Attorney-General is proving of great advantage to the soldier and relief to the Defence Department after the soldier is discharged.

The amount unexpended in last year's vote is due principally to the fact that the Expeditionary Force has first call on supplies and equipment, thus to a certain extent the Territorial Force had temporarily to go short.

During the year steady development has taken place in the organization and administration of the defence scheme: the recommendations by the Inspector-General, Overseas Dominions, have now been practically introduced. Reports by the three branches of Defence Headquarters contain detail in this respect.

I specially desire to bring to your notice the excellent and continued devotion to duty displayed by the Chief of the General Staff and all ranks of the Defence Department, both military, civil, and temporary, including such important sections as the Supply Board of Advice, Transport Board, Base Records, War Accounts Branch, Shipping, Embarkation and Disembarkation Staffs, Camp and Barrack Construction, &c., in which are so many capable voluntary workers. The mutual harmonious co-operation existing between all sections wholly accounts for the efficient manner in which the present strenuous duties are carried out.

The officers in temporary command of the four military districts are deserving of great consideration for the manner in which they have administered their command.

The Dominion is also fortunate in having two excellent officers to command at Trentham and Featherston Training-camps, with very efficient and capable training staffs.

I have, &c.,

A. W. ROBIN, Brigadier-General,
Commanding New Zealand Military Forces.

The Hon. the Minister of Defence.