

General French's Report on Militia Declares Present Condition Renders Prompt Action Altogether Impossible —"Mobilisation Would Be Chaos."

OTTAWA, Nov. 25.—"The state of affairs at the present moment would render a quick and prompt action, which is so vital an element in the frontier defence of Canada, altogether impossible and would effectually paralyze and frustrate any effective preliminary operation of war."

The above description of prevailing conditions in the Canadian militia is embodied in the report of Major-General Sir John French, which was laid on the table of the house of commons yesterday, after having been retained for many months by the militia council.

The report is in the form of a 22-page Blue Book and is accompanied by one, by Sir Percy Lake, as to how best to give effect to the recommendations.

General French does not mince matters. The gravamen of his findings is that there is too much fuss and feathers—too much ceremonial—but an entire absence of that sound peace organization essential to ensure that immediate mobilization and prompt movement essential in time of war.

The principal fault of the present system is that it is not the case, as it is now, that the present system meets the defensive requirements of the country or not.

He points out, however, that we live in times of great change and progress and the consideration of a more drastic military system is necessary.

The general's report as to strategic and other conditions is confidential and is not printed.

Artillery Below Requirements
General French makes allowance for drawbacks, but declares that the proportion between the arms of the service is not correctly adjusted. Infantry and heavy artillery are in excess of requirements, while cavalry is 50 per cent. below. He states that the proportion of troops and points out that, instead of each county or province furnishing its proper quota of various arms, one part favors mounted troops, another infantry, another artillery.

"Surely," he says, "these ought not to be insurmountable when the safety of the Dominion is involved."

Alluding to the existing plan by which certain war divisions are arranged to be formed on mobilization, the report says this contemplates a concentration into one organization where neither officers nor men have had experience or practice.

The annual camp trainings are only a large collection of troops without any organization on formation of all arms. The various arms do not work sufficiently in conjunction with one another and, as a consequence, neither commanders nor staff officers have any experience of the conditions which might develop in a few days after the outbreak of war.

Spirit and Energy
The general has a good word for the material in the militia, fine men with spirit and energy, but hampered by their patriotic endeavors by failure of organization and closer supervision over service rolls, of points of concentration for mobilization, and of proper stores for clothing and equipment at convenient points.

Railway War Council
A railway war council, including representatives of the principal railways, is strongly urged along with the preparation of a suitable scheme of mobilization. The staff at headquarters and commands is declared to be inadequate.

While the peace establishment is not large enough, the permanent force is regarded as up to a satisfactory standard of training efficiency.

Dealing with the militia generally, the general points out that some units are far ahead of others, but this does not apply to field artillery in anything like the same extent as cavalry and infantry. Of nine cavalry regiments he inspected in eastern Canada, only two appear to have attained a standard of efficiency commensurate with the material in them and the opportunities they have had. The general speaks well of the field artillery he saw at Petawawa.

The proper role of a cavalry officer in a country like Canada has not been properly appreciated, and energies have been used in the wrong directions. Were the most highly-trained cavalry in the whole of Europe put down to fight in this country, they would be compelled to act as mounted rifles. The general says the militia cavalry should rely for their power of offence upon the rifle rather than the sword. The physique of the new is excellent, but their inefficiency is due to faulty instruction. Squadron officers are not sufficiently grounded in their duties.

Too Much Attention to Evolutions
General French declares that, in the infantry far too much attention is given to ceremonial and evolutions, in fact the greater part of the time is devoted

to drills in respect of war training which are nearly obsolete. Excessive practice of ceremonial and neglect of manoeuvre have cramped both the initiative and intelligence of officers and men employed in field work. The result is mechanical barracks-square accuracy.

The artillery range at Petawawa is declared to be highly satisfactory as to location and equipment. The Niagara camp is too restricted.

Dealing with commands, the general expresses the view that the inspector general should not belong to the militia council, but rather the lines of inspection. Officers unable to attend inspections, time should be occupied in place of supervising organization, this time should be occupied in place of supervising organization.

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people of the Dominion will not get the best value for their money. Success in war depends today more than ever upon the harmonious working together of the different arms of the service, cavalry, artillery, engineers and infantry, and the mutual support they can render to one another. This can only be secured if each possesses a close and intimate knowledge of the others, and such advantage can only be gained if the peace organization of troops is assimilated to that which is required for war.

For these reasons, I am strongly of opinion that the establishment of a sound organization is the first and foremost requisite to render any army effective for war, and that no amount of superior physique, armament or individual excellence in either commander, staff or bodies of troops will compensate for a want of it.

I am well aware of the men, drawn back, which have hitherto hindered the Canadian militia but I feel myself compelled to state plainly that after a perusal of the existing system of organization, I do not believe that the present organization does not fulfill the above requirements for the following reasons:

(a) The proportion between the various arms of the service is not correctly adjusted. The infantry and heavy artillery are somewhat in excess of actual requirements, whilst the field artillery is at least 50 per cent. below the proper proportion. There is only one battery of field howitzers and the engineers and supply services are much too small.

The same remark applies to the distribution of troops. Instead of each county furnishing an area, something like the division of the country, it appears that one part furnishes the infantry, another the artillery and another the engineers and supply services.

(b) I am aware that under existing arrangements, certain war divisions are arranged to be formed on mobilization. According to these plans troops which have never served together as an organized body, are to be suddenly concentrated in an organization to which they are totally unaccustomed and placed under commanders and staff who will have no previous acquaintance in handling such a large collection of troops without any organization in formations of all arms.

The various arms do not, apparently work to a sufficient extent, in conjunction with one another, and hence have any practice in the handling of these war divisions with which, with their many have to encounter, armed troops in a thickly wooded country, which is a task to them.

Spirit of Mutual Understanding
I cannot lay too much stress on the necessity for cultivating the spirit of mutual understanding amongst the ranks of the troops which make up a war division. This can only be effected by assimilating the peace organization to those employed in the field.

The militia of Canada is composed of splendid material, and, according to my observation, is imbued with a sense of duty and a desire to be efficient, and a desire to be efficient, and a desire to be efficient.

Under the heading of organization and armament, General French says a full proportion of howitzer batteries should be established throughout the country in place of only one at present. He speaks rather appreciatively of the fortress at Halifax.

Proposed Reorganization
The conclusion of the report is a suggestion organized on basis of present establishments. In one cavalry division, five divisions two field forces, and one cavalry division, one field force, eleven brigades of field artillery, one heavy battery, three field troops, five field companies, four telegraph detachments of engineers, two army service corps, one cavalry field ambulance, three field ambulances, and surplus of seven heavy batteries of artillery.

General Lake in his report, agrees largely with what General French has to say, but he estimates that to fulfill the recommendations of the militia council, general staff officers and seven additional administrative staff officers will be required.

General French's report is addressed to the Hon. Sir Frederick Borden, K. C. M. G., etc., minister of militia and defence. In his introduction the general says:

From the instructions conveyed to me, I have conceived that it is your duty that I should report to you fully upon the state and condition of the Canadian militia, with respect to its readiness either to maintain internal order within the country, to protect its frontiers against attack, or to furnish contingents to succour other parts of the empire, in the event of the Dominion government seeing fit to follow on the precedent set by them in the late war in South Africa. Of these, the most important and necessary role which the militia have to fulfil is to defend Canada against attack by land.

A force which is in a sufficiently satisfactory condition of organization, training and efficiency to render the frontier reasonably secure, will also be in the best position either to furnish Imperial contingents, or to keep internal order.

Throughout this report, therefore, ability to defend the land frontiers of Canada has been the standard by which I have formed my judgment upon the conditions of the militia.

Organization Lacking
A sound system of organization is the corner stone of all military efficiency. Unless this is based upon a correct appreciation of the characteristics of the country and the requirements of the sources will certainly result, and the

conclusion is unavoidable that the number of officers available for the duty at Militia Headquarters, and in the several military districts is now, and apparently always has been, far too small to cope successfully with the various problems in their duties.

Military Training For Canada
After praising the Royal Military

college at Kingston, General French says:

It is probable that the services of two of the officers at headquarters could be dispensed with, but for the proper maintenance of mobilization arrangements, the remaining additional officers must be permanently retained. The staff at present maintained at Headquarters and in the Command appears to me absurdly inadequate in numbers to deal successfully with the numerous problems which require its attention.

At present it would not be possible to put the militia in the field in a fit condition to undertake active operations, until after the lapse of a considerable period.

The value of mobilization preparedness is very great, and its cost, compared to other military expenses is but small, provided a definite and continuous policy is pursued.

Cavalry Behind Hand
Coming now to the training methods generally adopted, and by commencing with the cavalry, I have already expressed the opinion that, as a whole, this arm is decidedly behind the others in regard to field efficiency, but I do not think the Canadian militia cavalry officers are altogether to blame for this state of affairs. It appears to me that the proper role of training, a country like eastern Canada has not been correctly appreciated, and that the staff colleges have been responsible for its training and inspection have not been used in a right direction.

The physique of the men is excellent. As a rule they are well mounted, the edge of horse and rider is the usual of the mounted rifleman in a close country. Their instruction is given in the form of a course of training and instruction.

Squadron officers are not sufficiently grounded in their duties as leaders and instructors. As a rule they cannot lead properly, nor are they sufficiently instructed themselves to train and instruct their men.

Ceremonial Cramped Initiative
With regard to the peace training of the infantry, I am of opinion that far too much attention is given to the practice of ceremonial exercises and evolutions. In fact, the greater part of the time allotted to training appears to be devoted to drills of a type which in respect of training for war are nearly obsolete. A certain amount of drill in close order, necessary to inculcate steadiness and accuracy of movement, but considering the very limited time available for training of all kinds, I consider that too much time should be devoted to company drills and that the time expended in battalion and brigade ceremonial parades be largely wasted.

Moreover, I have observed that the excessive practice of ceremonial and parades of manoeuvre have apparently retarded the growth of initiative and the intelligence of the officers and men when employed in field manoeuvres. The accuracy of the ranks and the steadiness of the ground to the effect of the enemy's action.

For this excessive devotion to ceremonial exercises, and to the holding of parades, I am, on the one hand, indebted to the staff colleges, and on the other to the young infantry officers at training schools, who are too much influenced by ceremonial parades and drill, and the practice of saluting with weapons.

Interference by Staff
I recommend that, if possible, the initiative of the staff should be reduced, and that they should be able to take a more active part in the military education of the troops. The initiative of the staff should be reduced, and that they should be able to take a more active part in the military education of the troops.

In my inspections and observations of the troops, I have sometimes noticed a somewhat unfortunate "safety" interference with the initiative of the staff. I think this should be corrected, and that the staff should be able to take a more active part in the military education of the troops.

I cannot close this part of my report without adding a few words as to certain opinions which I have heard expressed in influential quarters in this country. I refer to the erroneous ideas which are often propagated with respect to the numbers and composition of the staff.

It is evident that people who hold such views have absolutely failed to grasp the most essential factors to be considered in the solution of military problems.

At present there can be no doubt that the militia staff is inadequate for the amount of work required to be done, and that the efficient staff officer is undervalued both as compared to the regimental officer and in relation to the quality of the work performed.

The demands upon a staff officer in the way of expenditure are heavy and frequent, and the increase in the cost of living of late years while it has hit the officer and the civil servant alike, has been especially severe upon the district officer commanding, and the staff officers both at headquarters and in the commands and districts.

I venture to think that this subject deserves the early and serious consideration of the Dominion government. Efficient staff officers are an indispensable part of any military force, and it is to be effective, they cannot be provided when war threatens, and material inducements appear to be requisite in order to lead officers to submit themselves to the constant work and severe self-education necessary to efficient staff officers.

The holding out of rewards to efficient officers might well be considered, but by a strict watching out of others who have not made themselves proficient in their duties.

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