

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STATE OF
THE MILITIA FOR 1870.

(CONTINUED.)

*The Honorable Sir George E. Cartier, Bart.,
Minister of Militia &c., &c.*

GUNBOATS.

At present there are but two steam vessels, available to act as gunboats, (belonging to Government,) and attached to the militia service, for the whole of the extensive lake and river frontier of the Dominion, a distance of 1500 miles of inland waters. These vessels are considered more in the light of police gunboats than any thing else, for in the Treaty of Agreement between the Imperial and Dominion Governments, there is a distinct understanding that, in the event of a foreign war, the naval defence of the Dominion is to be undertaken by the mother country. One of these vessels, viz., the "Prince Alfred," is stationed at Sarnia, and is available to co operate with the militia in that part of the country for the defence of the St. Clair frontier, but is too large to admit of passage through the Welland Canal. This vessel is fast and powerful, mounting four guns, two of which are nine 12 pounder Armstrongs, the other, one 32 and one 12 pounder howitzer.

This *Prince Alfred* was originally a powerful tug steamer on the Upper lakes, and has been altered in such a manner as to render her an effective gunboat, and fitted with bullet-proof iron shields to go round the bulwarks. During last year this vessel rendered great services by conveying, to Sault Ste. Marie, large numbers of men, and a great quantity of stores required for the troops proceeding to Red River; the details of the services rendered by the *Prince Alfred* and by the *Rescue* during last year will be found in the Report of Mr. G. H. Wyatt, the Superintendent of gunboats; and on the first occasion in April of threatened invasion from the neighboring Republic, the *Prince Alfred* was manned and stationed on the St. Clair frontier, affording support and co-operation to the militia of that part of the country.

The other vessel, viz., the "Rescue," is stationed at Kingston, and is intended to co operate in the event of sudden invasion with the militia on the River St. Lawrence frontier. The "Rescue" can carry two guns, but is not so well constructed or adapted to act as a gunboat as the "Prince Alfred," and being moreover very old, and not worth incurring the expense of alteration and repair, it is recommended that this vessel be replaced by another, better adapted for the purpose. On reference to Mr. G. H. Wyatt, (the able and intelligent gunboat agent,) that officer recommends the acquiring or construction of a gunboat somewhat similar in dimensions to the "Prince Alfred." Mr. Wyatt reports that "to build a steamer 145 feet long, 26 feet beam, 10 feet hold, suitable to go through all the canals (but of less length than the "Prince Alfred," from Fort William to Montreal, having a speed of from 12 to 14 miles per hour, with accommodation for 40 men and 6 officers, carrying one gun fore and one aft, with two amidskip, (four guns in all) would probably cost

Hull and cabin fittings, complete...\$11,000
Engine boilers and machinery..... 12,000
Spars, rigging, sails, and outfit..... 3,000

\$26,000

If desirable to alter the rigging, sails, &c.,
saying of \$1000 can be effected, but this

sum (\$26,000) provides for a suitable steamer, built expressly for a gunboat of strength and speed.

Mr. Wyatt states the above as the probable cost of building a boat suitable for the canals, and of the description most serviceable in protecting the frontier. As the "Prince Alfred" cannot pass through the Welland Canal, she is confined to Lakes Huron, Erie, and Superior, and cannot be available for service on Lake Ontario or the River St. Lawrence; whereas a vessel built to pass through the canals would be available for service on any of the lakes or on the river frontier. The difference in length between a vessel as proposed by Mr. Wyatt and the "Prince Alfred," is 20 feet in length and 2 feet in beam.

For the defence of the Niagara frontier there is no vessel at all, at present, belonging to Government, and when it is considered that any system of defence for the lake and river frontier of the Dominion, which does not involve the action and co-operation of gunboats, is very incomplete, and altogether wanting in the most important element, I would beg strongly to recommend the acquisition or construction of another gunboat, of the description and dimensions recommended by Mr. Wyatt, to co operate in the defence of the Niagara frontier against such sudden inroads as the country has recently been exposed to, and to be stationed for headquarters at Port Colborne, and that these vessels be always kept in such condition as will admit of their services being available at all times during the period of open navigation at a moment's notice. Mr. Wyatt has called the attention of the Department to the advantage that would arise from engaging the working crew (14 officers and men) required to navigate the "Prince Alfred," by the year, instead of by the month as hitherto practiced. He states that the cost of keeping the above number of working crew for "time specified below will be for wages.

For the season of 8 months (when hired by the month)	\$5152
For one year (same crew)	4820
For three years (same crew) (by the year)	4820

"The crew can be engaged and kept on board one year for less money actually than only hired for eight months, besides being far more servicable, for under the constant changing no one understands the working of the boat. In the department of firemen alone, I know a great saving can be effected by having men steadily employed, to understand the requirements of the engine and boilers, and they will make one ton of coal do more work than fresh firemen can make one and a half tons do. As when we have to change so frequently as in the past season, men are not on board long enough to care about saving fuel, and I saw repeated waste in consequence, but as the men came and left as they liked, we had but little control over them. It would be different were the crew under articles. The extra expense of keeping them on during the winter months would be \$400 for provisions; they could be learning their drill and working in various ways during that time, and I would strongly recommend the engaging of the crew by the year or three years, for the best interests of the Government."

I would further beg to recommend that as these gunboats are attached to the militia service, and under the orders of the Department, and intended in the event of sudden invasion to co-operate with the militia, that the men engaged to serve as a crew, be regularly enrolled to serve in the militia for

three years, and be also trained to the use of guns, and that the officers of such vessels be commissioned as officers in the force. By this means the services of a small but effective naval brigade would be obtained, whose co-operation in the defence of the frontier would prove most valuable, and whose presence would convey a great feeling of security in exposed parts of the country. Moreover, acting as Revenue cutters the services of these gunboats might be found most useful, and I would also recommend that they be made available for gunnery instruction to the various independent Batteries of Artillery resident at different places along the Lake and River Frontier.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

In the course of my duties while inspecting many corps of the Active Militia within the last two years, at the time of their annual training, I could not fail to observe the weakness numerically of some of the Infantry Battalions—many of the companies not being up to their proper strength—and on inquiring the cause was invariably informed by the officers commanding such companies that they experienced great and increasing difficulty in filling up the ranks of their companies by voluntary enrolment; indeed, the great majority of these officers, (captains of companies) through whose exertions and instrumentality the force has been mainly sustained, seemed to be of opinion that without recourse to the ballot it would not be possible to keep their companies up to the proper strength under ordinary circumstances in future, for although the men of Canada come forward readily when the country has to be defended, and there is any fighting to be done, still, without such excitement, very many withhold from joining the ranks of the Active Militia. Yet unless trained to some extent to the use of arms and to act together beforehand it will be found too late to remedy this omission, when the enemy is at the gate, and men, however brave individually, would probably be found unable to protect their country.

The officers also informed me that the non-introduction of the ballot system (for which due provision is made in the Militia Act,) was a source of much dissatisfaction to the men actually enrolled in the Active Force, who considered that the continuance any longer of a system which throws the defence of the country upon certain individuals only, and is not shared equally by others, is unfair; and very many officers informed me that, in their opinion, the majority of the young men enrolled in the 1st class of the militia throughout the country would be found quite ready to respond to the ballot system, and thus no difficulty would be found in keeping their companies up to the proper strength.

I therefore feel it my duty to submit this for the serious consideration of the Government.

The number of men authorized to be drilled annually is limited to 40,000 by drawing these men, through the instrumentality of the ballot, out of men in the first class (i. e., young unmarried men or widowers without children, between the ages of 15 and 30,) to be replaced by others from the same class, on the expiration of their period of enrolment. Very little inconvenience to individuals, if any, would in reality be felt (for the training of the militia annually in camps of instruction, for a few days only, may be regarded by young men more in the light of a recreation than a hardship;) thus, in a few years, all the 1st class men would have been to some extent trained to arms, and in course of time all the men in the