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## THE ENGINEERS.

The following is the continuation, from last issue, of Inspector Mayne's annual report upon the Canadian Engineer corps:

To meet this question of promotion and to overcome some of the difficulties connected with the city corps, I beg to offer the following proposal. But before doing so, I must point out that militia troops can never hope to become "trained Engineers," in the full sense of the word, with only a few days training annually. Consequently, the term "Pioneer" companies would be far more appropriate than "Engineer" companies. The Engineer militia battalions in England, though called Engineers, are only trained in pioneer duties and elementary field engineering works. The same is the case with the Pioneer battalions in India, and the so-called "Sapper and Miner" companies there have civilian artisans attached to them for executing technical work, but otherwise they are only highly trained Pioneers. Consequently I hope that the "Pioneer" idea of the Canadian Militia Engineers will be fully kept in view in the consideration of the following proposal which practically suggests a complete reorganization of the Canadian Militia Engineers:—

### PROPOSED REORGANIZATION.

That the city companies be abolished and that a rural battalion be converted into a Pioneer battalion, which will go into camp for training every year as a battalion. This is the system in vogue with the English Militia Engineers, and works very well. These English Militia Engineer battalions were obtained by the conversion of Infantry battalions into Engineer battalions. But I would recommend this difference from the English practice, based on my experience on active service in Afghanistan, namely, that the number of companies in the battalion be halved and strength of each company doubled, and that each company be commanded by a major, having under him a captain and four subalterns. And further, the organization of the battalion as regards interior economy and discipline should be based on the company being the executive and administrative unit, in order to enable the com-

panies to be freely detached without dislocating the battalion as a whole and upsetting its internal administration. The Afghan campaign affords admirable illustrations of the use and abuse of the Engineer arm, and from my experience I am of opinion that the above recommendation will give the best results.

The Major in command of each company would be generally responsible for the training, administration and discipline of his company; the Captain of each company would be specially responsible for the care and provision of the equipment and stores and transport of the company, while each of the four subalterns would be responsible for the supervision and work of one of the four sections into which the company would be divided. It is very important that a Pioneer company should be capable of being thus broken up into small fractions, in order to enable it to be made use of in a systematic and orderly manner, in several places at the same time. The company equipment and transport should be similarly organized for the same reasons.

If I may suggest a particular rural battalion as being well fitted for the objects and purposes of a Pioneer battalion, I would name the 67th Battalion, Carleton Light Infantry. The special reasons why I have suggested this battalion are given below, but I may say here, that the men obtainable in the district lying around Woodstock, N.B., are the very men required for "pioneer" work, being skilful with the axe and equally well at home on land and on water.

With the addition of 40 or 50 men, the present 9 companies of the 67th Battalion could be re-organized into 5 companies of 90 men each, and officered as stated above. If the Brighton Engineers were then doubled in strength, they could be added to the battalion as a sixth company, with Major Vince in command of it, and Lieut. Tompkins being promoted to captain under him.

Of the various suggestions that might be put forward to remedy the existing defects in the Militia Engineer arm, the one I have made above is, in my opinion, not only the most practical, but also the one best suited for any possible military

operations in Canada. I have mentioned the 67th Battalion simply from its being composed of men well fitted for the purpose in view. These men, who are recruited from the Brighton district, have a natural aptitude for field engineering (as shown by their good work in previous years), and are accustomed to hard, continuous and heavy labour. Assuming that they are trained every year (without which they would be useless, as Engineers, or rather Pioneers, as there is so much purely technical work to be learnt) they would get about ten or twelve days a year of continuous practical work—all working together and all being instructed together on a regular system, with the different companies competing with one another under the same conditions for excellence. And if 400 or 500 men are thus got together, much really valuable and instructive work can be done which it is now impossible to do with a few weak, isolated companies, working and competing under entirely different conditions and surroundings. Their work would be actually done in the field and would not be confined to playing with models; materials having to be prepared as wanted, they would have an opportunity of seeing how long it takes to complete work (a most serious consideration) and how men can be most usefully employed; i. e., they would learn how to direct and apply labour. They would also learn the requirements of camp life, and have all the disciplinary advantages of being in camp and of being associated with other troops. Further, the conditions of agricultural life in this part of the Dominion are such that there is no difficulty in the men getting away for a fortnight's instruction in camp in the autumn. Another advantage of having a large number of men in camp together, is that engineering works can be carried on and finished by some squads, while others are at drill, and those employed on one kind of work can see the other kinds of work that have been finished by other squads of working parties, and thus they would receive a wider and fuller instruction in field engineering.

As regards the proposal to abolish the city corps, there is always a difficulty for city men (mechanics and clerks)