

The Canadian Militia Gazette

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CIVIL SERVANTS IN THE MILITIA.

Last week we entered a protest against the official discouragement of volunteering shown by the new regulations restricting or forbidding the acceptance of militia commissions by members of the Civil Service: and the particular instance which inspired our remarks has drawn also vigorous protests from several influential daily papers. The case is that of Lieut. Col. W. P. Anderson, who commands the 43rd Battalion, and in civil life is Chief Engineer of the Department of Marine. Report has it that when recently the value of his services to the Department was recognized by promotion to the Rank of Chief Clerk, with substantial increase of pay, the unwelcome intimation was made that a request for his withdrawal from the military service might be expected. When the militia was called to Hull a few weeks ago, Col. Anderson went in command, as senior officer in the district, and the one day's absence seems to have settled his fate as a commanding officer, a request for his withdrawal from the service immediately following. Such a request—equivalent to a command—the Minister at the head of the Department is empowered to give, on the strength of an Order-in-Council passed about two years ago, by which Deputy Heads of Departments are absolutely forbidden to hold commissions in the militia, and other officials are allowed to accept them only by special permission of the Minister. At the time this Order-in-Council passed, the Deputy Minister of Fisheries (under the same head as the Marine Department), Lt.-Col. Tilton, held the command of the Guards, and was obliged to resign; and previous to this Lt.-Col. White had, in anticipation of the new rule, resigned the command of the 43rd Battalion upon promotion from the Secretaryship of the Post-Office Department to be Deputy Postmaster General. Another victim was Capt. C. F. Winter, on the staff of the Fisheries Department, who a few months ago was promoted from a Lieutenancy and appointed Adjutant of the Guards, only to be promptly gazetted out altogether. No word of complaint has been heard from any of the officers above mentioned, their military instincts leading them to make the required sacrifices in silence. Apart, however, from any question of individual hardship, the state of affairs shown by the above instances is to be deplored, as likely to have a powerful influence in preventing Civil Servants from joining the militia in any capacity; and the merchants and employers generally cannot be blamed if they follow the Government's

example and make connection with the militia a bar to promotion or engagement. A great obstacle to the volunteer movement has been the resulting inconvenience to business interests, and those disposed to refuse consent to any such temporary disarrangement of their affairs will for the future have this Departmental example to point to in justification.

In our opinion the obnoxious Order-in-Council was not passed with the intention that the power given under it should be abused as it has been, and we think that the Minister of Militia would be fully justified in entering a strong protest against any such interference with the force for whose welfare and efficiency he is responsible. As one of the senior members of the Cabinet, Sir Adolphe Caron should assert himself in no uncertain manner, and prompt action in this connection will earn for him the gratitude of the whole militia.

In reply to the semi-official explanation made, that a Civil Servant may be urgently required in the Department at the very moment when military service may call him elsewhere, we would point out that unless the military service is very serious indeed it is always easy for an officer to obtain leave of absence to attend to urgent civil business.

The camps, now in progress in some districts and just over in others, appear from all accounts to have passed off as satisfactorily as could be expected, and the fall weather has not been unpropitious for purposes of military exercise. General Herbert has paid great personal attention to the camp work, himself spending a few days under canvas wherever possible, and the experience thus gained is apt to be turned to the practical advantage of the force. The General Orders governing the camps, issued as they were when the shooting season was at its height, have been, on that account, rather overlooked by all except those immediately concerned. We reprint them in this issue, and readers will find them of unusual interest, because of the new features, especially in connection with the musketry practice, and the general efficiency competitions initiated.

Reference has already been made briefly to a bill amending the Militia Act, laid before Parliament by Sir Adolphe Caron a few days before prorogation, and standing over for re-introduction next session. A perusal of the text, appearing in full elsewhere, will show that the bill deals with a variety of subjects in addition to the matter of expense of