

with the matter than I am. It is, therefore, not for any purpose of precipitating a general discussion that I say anything at all to-night upon the general policy. I am indebted to the hon. member for York (Mr. Mulock) and the hon. member for Toronto (Mr. Denison) for the suggestions they have made, and I can tell the hon. gentleman (Mr. Denison) that his suggestion with reference to incorporating the old system of schools upon the new will receive my earnest attention, when I have time to make some reforms in the Militia Department, as I sincerely hope to be able to do. With respect to the permanent corps, I may tell the committee that my present intention is to reduce them to 800 men and officers, which the committee will see is a very material reduction. I also hope to make them more generally serviceable in the drilling of the active militia, and the furnishing of drill instructors. I do not know that at the present time it is necessary for me to say anything more upon this particular item. The vote asked for is a vote for the current year, and in connection with the policy of the department for which I am not personally responsible. It does not apply in any way to the reduction I propose to make in the permanent corps; that will come in the next year's Estimates. It is asked from the House simply to discharge the obligations of the Government with regard to the present establishment of the permanent corps.

Mr. SCRIVER. What is the strength of the permanent corps now?

Mr. DICKEY. It is quite up to the average of 1,000 men.

Mr. O'BRIEN. If the Minister of Militia takes the advice of any member of this House in the administration of his department, he will be the first Minister who has ever done so since I have had the honour of a seat in Parliament. We have had discussion after discussion on militia matters, and I have never yet discovered that the slightest result came from them. It was pure waste of time, so far as the force is concerned. The Militia Department went steadily on in the path in which they started some years ago, magnifying the permanent corps into a standing army at the expense of the rest of the force. Last year they increased it beyond what the law allows; but this Government pays no attention to the law. The law allowed 1,000 men, and they increased the force to 1,100. Now they propose to reduce to 800 men, and they might reduce it very much more. I think 500 men would be ample for the country or the force. I am not averse to the schools of instruction, but I do protest against their body being regarded and kept up as a standing army at the expense of what is really the army of Canada, that is, the active militia. While I think it would be very pro-

Mr. DICKEY.

per to postpone the general discussion of this question until the main Estimates are before us, a word may be said of the way in which the Government have treated the force during the past year, showing how little the interests of the officers and men of the force have been consulted as to what is their chief interest, the annual drill. Twelve months ago they were under orders to go to camp. That order was not rescinded until the time had elapsed when we should have been in camp. The officers and men went to considerable trouble and expense in preparing for camp, and nothing came of it; all that trouble and expense was thrown away. Naturally, the officers and men felt aggrieved that, after having been ordered to camp and having made preparations for it, no provision was made for their going. This year, about the 15th May, we were told most unexpectedly—for there was nothing in the Estimates for the purpose—to prepare for camp, barely more than four weeks being allowed for preparation. I would like the hon. Minister to understand one thing, what I have not yet been able to get any previous Minister to understand, that there is nothing more injurious to the force than to give these orders for drill without sufficient time being allowed for preparations to be made. Unless the men know early in the spring that they are going to camp, they make other engagements; and it is exceedingly unfair, both to employers and employees, to order camp at short notice. When an employee goes to his employer and informs him that he has been ordered to camp, the employer naturally asks him, "Why didn't you tell me before?" and it is not unnatural that he should say, "If you go without giving me notice, you need not come back." Therefore, it is exceedingly necessary that there should be some certainty about this matter. With regard to the general subject of the instruction of the force, I am quite prepared to advocate the continuance of the schools on a very much reduced scale, and their being treated simply as schools of instruction and nothing else, which could be done with at least half the men now employed. At present they are perfectly useless for instruction. The whole work is done by two or three non-commissioned officers, and the rest of the expense is practically thrown away. However, I do not intend to go into a general discussion to-night, partly because I have found it to be useless to do so, although I do hope, from the spirit shown by the present Minister, that we may look for better things in the future. I am afraid that the Minister of Militia is a very unimportant member of the Cabinet, for the interests of the militia force are always the last to be regarded and the first to give way to political exigencies, as I think has been plainly seen this season. It is perfectly clear that there was no intention to drill the force when the Estimates were brought down. However, it is some satis-