

But, the practice now of giving them a few rounds of ammunition and only one or two days of practice reduces their value. It neither creates an incentive for the work nor does it make them experts. They should meet from month to month, and have their regular rifle practices, and ammunition should be served out to them in sufficient quantities to enable them to indulge in constant rifle practice. That is what they like, and that is what makes them the best militia experts.

Mr. FOWLER. What is the present strength of the permanent force?

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. The number is limited to 1,000. The establishment is over 800 now.

Mr. FOWLER. I understood it was about 600.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. The last figures I have are 805 men; 152 non-commissioned officers and 64 officers, making 1,021, including the officers. The strength may vary about 50 during the year.

Mr. FOWLER. The militia list gives the number of officers as more than the minister stated. It seems to me that this permanent force is slightly top heavy. I notice by the militia list that there are four colonels; fifteen lieutenant-colonels, twenty majors, thirty-two captains and seven lieutenants. I understand of course that the permanent force is a sort of skeleton force intended to make a number of regiments out of in case of necessity, but the department appears to have been more kind to this branch of our military service than to the general militia. Take for example the district officer commanding. He has under his command any where from 3,000 to 5,000 men, but he is a lieutenant-colonel almost in every case, whereas the permanent force of 800 men has no less than four full colonels and fifteen lieutenant-colonels. It seems to be rather unfair to the district officers commanding, who are in many cases quite as competent and quite as deserving of high rank as are the men who happen to belong to the permanent force. I know of district officers who have been in the North-west rebellion, and who have been outranked by officers far their junior in point of service, and not their superior in point of military ability. This is a matter which is deserving the attention of the minister. It seems to me that it is rather unfair to our general militia officers. I have understood that there was some objection to promoting the district officers on the part of the General Officer commanding, because it was felt that in case difficulty should occur the officers who would come from the Imperial service to command in Canada would not care to have our militia officers holding high rank. I hope that rumour is entirely unfounded, because the experience in South

Africa has shown that we have officers in Canada who are quite as well fitted for the positions which they occupy as are the Imperial officers. If that objection has been urged it should be removed at once.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. I am not aware that the General Officer commanding has made any statement of the kind; he certainly has not to me. I have no objection however to state that there was an inquiry from the War Office to know to what extent it was proposed to utilize the power which parliament gave the executive two years ago, to appoint colonels. The answer that the government made upon my recommendation was that we proposed to follow the rule of the Imperial army with reference to the rank of colonel. However, the main point of the statement of the hon. gentleman (Mr. Fowler), was: that we had in the permanent force, officers out of all proportion to the number of men. On the face of it that might appear to be a fair criticism, but I will remind the hon. gentleman (Mr. Fowler) of what he must know, being a military man himself. We have in the permanent force the nucleus of what would be the Canadian army if we were called upon to mobilize. We have in the permanent force every branch of the militia except the engineers. We have the two branches of artillery, field and garrison; the two branches of mounted troops, dragoons and mounted rifles, and we have the infantry. When the hon. gentleman takes into consideration that we have these five branches in the permanent force, he will not object to the number of officers. In fact I think we require more officers rather than less. As to the appointment of full colonels in the permanent force, I explained recently to the hon. gentleman from Victoria (Mr. Hughes) that most of these appointments were made as a result of the distinguished service these officers rendered in South Africa. Had it not been for the war in South Africa I fancy these promotions would not have been made. What the hon. gentleman (Mr. Fowler) said with reference to certain of the district officers not having been promoted has some force in it. It is quite true that at least one or two of the district officers served with distinction in the North-west rebellion. I have been at some pains to look at the records of that time, and I must say that the officers who served for the maintenance of the government of this country against rebellion, were not treated as they should have been. On considering the matter, I felt that it was very difficult to deal with it, it being so long ago, and that perhaps I had better leave it alone. I may say that I hope at an early date we shall be able to recommend that promotion to the position of colonel shall be given in the case of several district officers, and I hope also to some officers of the active militia.