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SECRET.

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C.P. 3231.

THE CABINET.

**REDUCTION IN THE INFANTRY OF THE TERRITORIAL FORCE.**

MEMORANDUM BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR.

The scheme\* for the Territorial Force laid before the Cabinet by my predecessor on 29th December, 1919, provided for the reconstruction of the Force on the basis of 14 Infantry Divisions with 12 Infantry battalions to a Division, or a total establishment of 168 Infantry battalions and a proportion of Army Troops which did not include any Infantry battalions.

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Before the war there were 208 infantry and cyclist battalions; the additional 40 battalions, including all cyclist battalions, were required for coast defence and other services. These 40 infantry and cyclist battalions are as a result of the war no longer required. At the time that the Territorial Force was reconstituted there was required a larger proportion of technical arms, such as artillery, anti-aircraft units, &c., than obtained before the war. In order to supply these additional technical units, the policy was adopted of inviting the surplus infantry and cyclist units to convert to other arms with a view to retaining the identity and *esprit de corps* of those units. This general policy of conversion or amalgamation with preservation of identity was announced at a meeting of Territorial Force Associations which was held on 29th January, 1920.

Of the 40 surplus Infantry battalions, 16 have already accepted conversion to other arms, one has been disbanded and two have not been re-formed since the war. There still remain 21 battalions in excess of all military requirements which were allowed to reconstitute as Infantry by my predecessor, but these 21 battalions are in excess of the 168 battalions mentioned in the Cabinet Memorandum which was laid before the Cabinet in December, 1919.

It had been decided in January, 1921, before I received the seals of office, that the 21 battalions of the Territorial Force with the fewest recruits on 1st July of this year should be disbanded. As on that date the formation of the Defence Force had temporarily suspended the activities of the Territorial Force, it was decided to take the last date upon which strength returns of the Territorial Force had been rendered, namely, 25th March, as the governing date for determining the strength of Territorial battalions.

A Territorial battalion costs approximately 19,500*l.* a year, and by adopting a policy of amalgamation, or failing that, disbandment, a saving of over 400,000*l.* a year can be effected.

Of the 21 battalions, 18 have been satisfactorily absorbed by a process of amalgamation; one battalion (Inns of Court) has agreed to become an Officers Training Corps, and the cases of two battalions are still outstanding. In selecting the 21 battalions, regard had naturally to be paid not merely to their strength but also to their geographical location, so as to avoid the possibility of all the amalgamations taking place within a limited number of Territorial Divisional areas. It was, therefore, decided that each Divisional area must absorb its own redundant battalions. With the object of ascertaining the best possible solution to meet all local conditions, the Territorial Associations concerned have all been consulted, and they have not infrequently offered suggestions which have proved most helpful. Where two battalions agree to amalgamate, it has been arranged that they should each provide a separate half battalion (two companies), and should retain, if they wish, their special uniform, badges, &c., to mark the continuity of their existence.

At the same time, it must be recognized that this policy of amalgamation or disbandment must obviously be most unpopular and difficult to carry out without causing considerable dislocation and resentment in the Territorial military circles affected, and I think it right that my colleagues should be made aware of what is taking place, as considerable pressure is being brought to bear on some of them to prevent this policy of the reduction of the 21 redundant battalions from taking effect in the constituency for which they sit.

I will cite the following examples :—

(i.) The Secretary of State for the Colonies has sent me a protest from the City of Dundee against the proposed amalgamation of the 4th and 5th Battalions, Black Watch. These two battalions are raised respectively by the City of Dundee and Forfarshire. After consultation with representatives of the Highland Associations and the local Military authorities, it was decided that these two battalions should be amalgamated, each of the existing battalions being asked to produce two companies for the amalgamated battalion. Taking into consideration the relative populations of the two areas and the total number of Territorial troops allotted to each, this would appear to be the most satisfactory arrangement, and I am anxious to help my colleague by arranging that the headquarters of the amalgamated battalion shall be in Dundee.

It is not in every case possible to arrange that the military contribution of various areas should be exactly in proportion to the population, because the distribution of Territorial units is based upon that made in 1908 by Lord Haldane when Secretary of State for War at the inception of the Territorial Force, and is dependent to some extent on the past history of Volunteer units and the military buildings that may be in existence.

(ii.) The Minister of Health has also approached me on behalf of the 6th and 7th Battalions, The Welsh Regiment, but I hope that the proposed amalgamation of these two battalions will be amicably settled.

(iii.) My colleagues will remember that in the House of Commons on the 11th July, Captain Wedwood Benn raised the question of the 7th Battalion, The Royal Scots, which it is intended shall be amalgamated with the 9th Battalion, The Royal Scots. This amalgamation takes place *pari passu* with the amalgamation of two other battalions of that regiment to which the City of Edinburgh Association, who raise them, have agreed, and I cannot extend exceptional treatment to the 7th Battalion when my refusal in the case of those battalions raised by the City of Edinburgh has been loyally accepted.

I propose to continue this policy of amalgamation, as being in conformity with the policy which I inherited, with the recommendation of my Military Advisers, and with the requirements of the financial situation, and I venture to assume my colleagues' support. If they do not see their way to accord me this support, no doubt they will raise the question in Cabinet.

THE WAR OFFICE,

16th August, 1921.

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