

PART V

COMMENTS BY THE AUTHOR

Personal observations on
the Voluntary and
Universal Training systems
and the Permanent Military
Forces.

1920 – 1940

In considering any effective defence force it should be borne in mind that the size and strength of the modern army comes from the trained workman and not from the strength and brawn of the physically fit unskilled labourer or youthful soldier of past wars of rifle and bayonet – ie. two-dimensional wars of limited mobility and absence of technical weapons and equipment. Among the main factors of an effective defence service are now

- a. The Army (Navy or Air) requires the whole nation as its base and source of man power, equipment, mobility, stores and amenities.
- b. Mechanization and increased technical equipment has brought into the fighting services a new type of man that is of the greatest value – the skilled artisan and other intelligent wage earners of the middle class who form the bulk of the Army and provide the officers and NCOs of the fighting and technical units as replacements of battle casualties.
- c. The time when a few trained leaders and experienced soldiers could be rapidly expanded into regiments by the addition of physically fit but untrained and unskilled man power has passed away – even the intellectual artisan and technician requires military training and experience to adapt his skill and knowledge to the team work and military methods and requirements of the varying arms of the Service, and the responsibilities of inferiors and superior ranks which are necessary in all units, services and departments of an Army.
- d. The elimination of time in communication by wireless and in the Air transport over previously inconceivable distances of destructive materials or paratroops has robbed peaceloving nations of any lengthy period in which untrained hordes of citizens can be converted into organized units of trained soldiers even for passive defence.

To recommend or even suggest the type of army which should constitute the Australian Military Forces in future years is outside the purpose of this article, which is intended only to review and analyse the Military Defence Forces of the past 25 years, with the high qualities and shortcomings, with the reasons therefor wherever possible.

The sections under which the types are reviewed are as follows:

1. Universal Training – from 1920 to 1929.
2. Voluntary Militia 1930 – 1940.
3. Permanent Military Forces.
4. Volunteer Expeditionary Forces.
5. Citizen Forces in Section 60 D.A.

(CITIZEN FORCES)

- (a) From 1926 to 1929 the quotas in training annually comprised those youths who became 18 years of age during the year and those of 19 and 20 years of age already in training.
- (b) At June of each year a unit comprised the following classes of members in its rank and file:
 - (i) One third, comprising those over 20 years of age who had completed three years' service. This contained most of the N.C.O.s.
 - (ii) One third, comprising those over 19 years of age who had been at two camps of training and still had one year to serve.
 - (iii) One third comprising those over 18 years of age who had attended one camp and had two years to serve.
- (c) After 1st July of each year those over 20 years of age passed out from training. This group comprised the N.C.O.s, most of whom passed out leaving their places to be filled by Privates from those over 19 years of age, who, with less than 2 years' service had to be put through brief classes of instruction to provide the N.C.O.s for the next camps of training, where one-third of the members in the ranks would be attending their first camp as recruits. The two elder quotes, with these recruit N.C.O.s, were therefore all that was available for training at camp, who had to be confined to the most elementary platoon drill in fire and movement.
- (d) Tactical handling had to be confined to drill or demonstration based on the middle quota's standard of military knowledge. As this roundabout system of losing one-third of the best trained youths and receiving an equivalent number of untrained recruits in their place occurred every year, progressive training from year to year was impossible, and so the standard of elementary military knowledge and experience through the years remained that of the 19 year olds, ie. platoon training.
- (e) True, officers and keen N.C.O.s did attend additional training at schools, courses and classes during the year but the command, leadership and tactical handling learnt was theoretical and only able to be passed on as training to the rank and file by the fact that many officers still serving had been on active service and had battle experience and knowledge of the relationship of the theoretical training to battle conditions.
- (f) The standard of knowledge reached by the members of the rank and file during their brief period of military training was excellent, but such efficiency was only in relation to statutory requirements of attendance at a few days' training, and elementary handling of weapons.

- (g) It bore no relation to the proficiency required of trained soldiers to undertake successful battle operations.
- (h) By 1929 the opposition of the Australian youth to military training was practically nil, as out of a strength of 37,215 in that year, 35,755 were classified as efficient, i.e. – in attendance.
- (j) That the treatment they had received during their period of compulsory training left no feeling of resentment in the minds of Australia's young men, is also borne out by the fact that in 1929, when universal service was suspended, the only field from which volunteer Militiamen could be obtained was from males who were ex-Universal Trainees. By 1930, 25,000 had re-enrolled as volunteers (mostly in the units in which they had previously served compulsorily) for form the Militia which continued till the outbreak of war in 1939.
- (k) Lord Kitchener's memorandum on the Defence of Australia, page 7, paragraph 17, refers to certain requirements failing which no military system can be other than an illusion and a source of waste of public funds. His picture of Battalions of men between 20 and 25 years of age, of a peace strength of approximately 750 rank and file, whilst the Infantry units actually in existence from 1923 to 1929 barely averaged 300 youths between 18 and 21 years for a brief period each year in which to learn the complexities of additional weapons and altered tactics introduced during the war of 1914 – 1919, in addition to the rifle and bayonet of the era of Lord Kitchener and General Hamilton's visits of inspection.
- (l) Sir Ian Jamilton's report of his visit of inspection in 1914 to observe the progress of Universal Training, among many important comments, quotes:

Paras. 5, 6, 7 & 8: The four guiding principles of a national Militia:

- i It must express life of community in widest sence.
- ii The system in peace must as nearly as possible coincide with the system definitely accepted for war.
- iii A Militia and a regular Army are different entities.
- iv Training and administration are fundamentally distinctive in a Militia force.

Para. 30: The organisation of a nation for war is one thing – the Militia training of its youth is another and totally different thing.

Para. 53: Recruit training of 16 days a flea bite unless backed by senior cadet training.

Para. 99: Limitations of Australian land forces are those of any Militia – patriotism, keenness, study and careful instruction, strain and struggle on the heels of practical experience, but rarely quite catch up. Until a Militia has been called out for service and has been some time in the field, it will always, for this reason, lack self-confidence when faced by professional soldiers.

Paras. 127 – 132: Cites discipline – particular paras. 128 and 132.

Paras. 167, 168 and 169: Continued to apply throughout the years 1921 – 1929 but because of the limited period of training, the standard hardly progressed beyond the illustration in paras. 170 – 174.

Paras. 193 – 197: Are also of interest now after participation and the experience of two major wars.

- (m) The low standard of war efficiency of the Australian Military Citizen Forces under the U.T. conditions between 1921 and 1929 was in no way due to any shortcoming of the instruction, or lack of interest of the members, but due entirely to the fact that the scheme of U.T. accepted by the Commonwealth in 1910 was never applied in full, the partial implementation providing neither the prescribed number of days in any one year, nor the prescribed number of years to allow for progressive training of the adult manhood. Instead it only provided for a limited force for youths to undergo a nominal training before reaching the age of 21 years, and of whom one-third were always recruits.
- (n) The standard of efficiency in elementary Military training which was attained during the period was exceptionally high for such a brief training course.
- (o) In 1930 by the influxion of time, the number of officers with any war service was confined entirely to those few in the senior ranks and the appointments of second-in-commands of Battalions were liable to be filled by keen theoretically trained officers who had never seen a battalion of anything approaching war strength on parade with its equipment and necessary transport, nor practised even a company in battle tactics with other arms of the Service.
- (p) Because of limitations to the few localities in which the scheme was operative, (Appendix 2), the scheme could not in any sense be looked upon as universal where only 6.5% of those liable under the Defence Act were called up for service (Appendix 1), nor as shown in the foregoing could the amount of training received in 3 year of 12 days each of 6 hours be considered in any way serious “training for defence”, as was the intention of Part XII of the Defence Act.

- (q) Had the (Kitchener) Universal Training scheme been carried out in its entirety in accordance with the Defence Act, Part III, the Australian Army would have possessed the following valuable qualities: in 1929:
- i Members on reaching the age of 25 would have had 7 years of adult progressive training behind them.
 - ii Many keen junior officers and N.C.O.s (who were unable to continue voluntary service after 21 years of age, because of employers not allowing leave for continuous training) would have continued in the service – thus increasing the average age of experienced junior officers and N.C.O.s.
 - iii It would have included many of the enthusiastic volunteer personnel who rejoined and formed the nucleus of the voluntary Militia from 1930 – 1939, and would have enabled their example and instruction to be passed on to a greater number of citizen soldiers.
 - iv It would have included in its ranks the sons of the wealthier middle class, who were able to remain at College till a later age, and to be assimilated into professions or businesses on higher strata than the working youth.
 - v The numbers attending a particular parade could be estimated beforehand, and progressive training planned, knowing that the numbers attending would be large enough to enable the exercise to be practical.
 - vi Every year another adult quota of men in the prime of manhood would be added to the reserve which, for 20 years from the introduction of the scheme, would have consisted of men under 40 year of age.
 - vii The citizen soldier who had completed his service at the age of 25 years would have been in every sense a trained soldier reservist, capable of taking his place immediately in the ranks on mobilisation for defence.
 - viii From the point of view of citizenship, many lasting friendships were made on the level of equal comradeships during the period of training, between individuals from very varying walks in life, employment, education and domicile, which would not have been brought about by any other organisation for that purpose, however fervent an idealistic its leaders and sponsors.
 - (ix) Opportunity would have been given to male citizens in all except remote parts to learn the rudiments of military drill and weapon handling, instead of such large inland cities contained in Appendix 2 attached.