

**THE BOER WAR:
ARMY, NATION AND EMPIRE**

**'MANUFACTURING SPONTANEITY'?
THE ROLE OF THE COMMANDANTS IN THE COLONIAL OFFERS
OF TROOPS TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR**

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During the 1970s a number of Australian historians—most notably CN Connolly in his article 'Manufacturing "Spontaneity": The Australian Offers of Troops for the Boer War'—challenged the orthodox view that the colonial offers of troops for the South African War were spontaneous and argued that the initial Australian response was 'manufactured' through the machinations of London and its imperial agents in the colonies.¹ The seconded British Army commanders of the colonial military forces, or commandants as they were known, were criticised by the revisionists as being the main imperial conspirators in the Australian colonies. This paper re-examines the role of the commandants in the decisions of the colonial governments to offer contingents to the South African War, and specifically whether they were involved in an Imperial conspiracy.

At the War Office on 8 June 1899, three days after the collapse of the Bloemfontein conference which increased the prospect of war between Britain and the Transvaal,² the commander-in-chief of the British Army, Lord Wolseley, proposed beginning preparations for an expeditionary force to be sent to South Africa. Wolseley's belligerent minute concluded, 'It would create an excellent feeling if each of the Australian Colonies, Tasmania, and New Zealand; furnished contingents of mounted troops, and that Canada should furnish two battalions of foot'.³ Colonial and Imperial troops serving side by side in war had been the hope of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, since the Colonial Conference of 1897.⁴ A month after similarly contemplating rallying the Empire behind the cause of South Africa,⁵ Chamberlain finally, on 3 July 1899, instructed the governor-general of Canada, together with the governors of New South Wales and Victoria, secretly to request their respective governments to offer military assistance. The cable sent to New South Wales and Victoria asked:

Can you, without publicity, find out from authorities whether they would avail themselves of this opportunity to show the solidarity of the Empire. Such an offer, spontaneously made, would be welcomed here, & might have a great effect in South Africa.⁶

The British colonial secretary also made it clear that while their military contributions would be used, the real value of the colonial offers were to be a political 'demonstration'.⁷ This is where Wolseley and Chamberlain differed: the soldier was keen for a fight and believed a military demonstration would provoke war while the politician looked upon it as a means to force the South African Republic into capitulation as he still hoped for a 'peaceful settlement'.⁸ Chamberlain's request for military assistance is viewed by revisionists as the lynch-pin in their argument that the colonial offers of troops were not spontaneous. Long before the request's arrival in Sydney, however, the British commandant in New South Wales had been agitating for a colonial military commitment in South Africa.

On 27 June 1899, Major-General George Arthur French wrote to Colonel George Gough, private secretary to Wolseley, to 'put forward privately (as I cannot officially)' advice for the commander-in-chief on how to obtain colonial contingents.⁹ Only a day earlier, Sydney's *Daily Telegraph* had reported the New South Wales commandant as sanctioning the recent spate of volunteering within the colony's forces, and that perhaps he had initiated it.¹⁰ It had not been the first time that French had advocated active service for the colony's military forces as he had supported the Lancers' request to serve in India two years earlier. Now, in July 1899, French informed the War Office that in the event of war in South Africa large numbers of New South Wales troops would volunteer for service. He added that,

Our men are continually volunteering to go anywhere for the sake of Active Service, but hitherto, except Soudan [sic] 1885, have been bluffed off, as no one could say on what conditions they would be accepted. To my mind it is highly important for Imperial as well as Colonial reasons that such an excellent spirit should be encouraged.

With this as his stated motivation, French provided the War Office with the benefit of his twenty years experience of the self-governing colonies in order to secure the services of colonial troops.¹¹ He believed his men would volunteer for war but not for longer periods and also be prepared to accept the same rates of pay and allowances as British soldiers for such short periods. However, the main obstacle remained:

The average Colonial Government has usually not got backbone enough to offer the services of their men who volunteer, if they have to bear the cost, and defend their action in Parliament when asking supplies to be voted, after all the war enthusiasm has evaporated.

French's solution was simple: the British Government should let it be known that if they accepted colonial troops they would meet all the costs. With this understanding, the commandant believed that the colonial governments could be encouraged to bear at least a portion of the expense. French anticipated the British Government's objection would be that they were paying British Army rates for a force 'much below that standard'. He argued that the real burden on the British taxpayer was maintaining a permanent standing army whereas under his plan colonial troops would be an expense only when used on active service. Beyond mere business considerations, however, the British officer argued that 'the immense moral advantages to England should not be lost sight of'.

The fact is that French looked beyond South Africa to the establishment of an imperial military system and actually informed Wolseley that he had drawn up a general scheme to provide a 'war reserve' of colonial troops for imperial service. The War Office would have to wait for another year to receive this scheme, however, as French's immediate concern was to secure the opportunity of active service for his colonial troops in the present crisis.¹² Toward this end, he further provided the War Office with a scheme for 'a complete self-contained Force' of approximately 2500 men as an indication of 'what we in New South Wales could do in case our services are likely to be of use in South Africa in the next few months'.¹³

French's private correspondence was a highly irregular act, if not illegitimate, but one not unexpected from an officer who while owing his present employment to the colonial government had spent his entire professional life in Her Majesty's Forces. There was also a more personal motivation, one not expressed to the War Office, as French was desperate to see active service which had so far eluded him throughout his long career. The added incentive of active service for French was that it might save him from what seemed like imminent retirement at the end of his present appointment. The actions of this aging imperial officer during the following months certainly mark him as a man who viewed South Africa, as he openly admitted, as the 'chance of a lifetime'.¹⁴ This mix of personal desire to see active service together with a genuine professional view of the potential role of colonial forces in imperial defence was at the heart of all the commandants' subsequent calls to go to South Africa.

The greatest significance of French's private correspondence of 27 June in the context of the present argument is that it was written a week before Chamberlain's telegram reached Sydney and was therefore an independent and spontaneous gesture. This fact has been missed by previous historians because of a contemporary copying error which dated French's letter as 27 July, instead of June, although this does not excuse the historians concerned for failing to question how it could be possible during an age of surface mail for a letter supposedly written in Sydney on 27 July to be the subject of discussion at the War Office four days later!¹⁵ There is absolutely no evidence that the British authorities had contacted French and highly improbable because the New South Wales commandant was insignificant as far as they were concerned. What French's actions superbly highlight is the penchant of British commandants for individual initiatives which often, albeit not always, accorded with the wishes of London.

French's primary concern about the financial question preventing a colonial military contribution was soon realised in London as the Colonial Office received the cabled replies to Chamberlain's request. From 5 July onwards, the governors of New South Wales and Victoria reported that while their governments would support the enlistment of already large numbers of volunteers by the British Government they were not inclined to incur the cost of sending a contingent themselves.¹⁶ The problem for the colonial governments was one of justifying what at this stage seemed unnecessary military expenditure, just as French had anticipated.¹⁷ The responses of the colonial governments came as a great disappointment to the Colonial Office, leading one official to remark with regard to a reply from Victoria: 'It is a pity the troops who are anxious to volunteer could not inspire some of their spirit into their premier'.¹⁸ It was something the commandants also regretted and were trying to bring about for their own reasons.

The first official offer of troops from a colonial government in the empire, in fact, was the result of a recommendation from a British commandant. On 6 July, Major-General Howel Gunter,¹⁹ the Queensland commandant, suggested to his premier that a contingent of 250 Queensland Mounted Infantry 'be offered for duty with the Imperial troops in the event of hostilities breaking out between Great Britain and the Transvaal'.²⁰ With rather an undistinguished career and no war service, Gunter's motivation may have been, like his colleague in New South Wales, the desire to see active service although he never publicly stated it. The newly elected premier, James Dickson, took up the idea and, without parliamentary sanction, cabled the offer to London on 10 July.²¹ Gunter's letter did not mention that he was speaking for any volunteers which was later criticised in parliament.²² Dickson defended that the offer from the mounted infantry had been verbal and that he had no reason to doubt the word of his commandant.²³ Even if the premier was correct, it is unknown whether this verbal offer was unsolicited or at the request of the commandant.

What is clear is that there is absolutely no evidence of collusion between the British authorities and the commandant despite Connolly's claims. He argues that because the Queensland offer came only days after Chamberlain's cable it is 'circumstantial evidence that it was not spontaneous', and suggests that the Queensland governor may have been tipped off by his southern colleagues although the short period of time between the arrival of the cable in Sydney and Melbourne on 4 or 5 July and Gunter's memorandum written on 6 July makes this highly improbable. Connolly alternately speculates that the Queensland governor may have received an unofficial communication from Chamberlain which he argues 'would account for an anomaly in the Colonial Office records: the fact that the draft of the cable acknowledging the offer is dated 10 July—the day before the offer was received'.²⁴ He concedes that this may have been a clerical error, but it is Connolly who made the error for he misread the Colonial Office's reply which is not dated 10 July, as he claims, but 11 July, the day the offer was received, as one would expect.²⁵ The Colonial Office official responsible for the Australian colonies, moreover, referred to the Queensland telegram as an 'unsolicited offer' and there was no reason for this official not to be telling the truth in an internal minute.²⁶ The problem with Connolly's argument is that he is held captive by his thesis and will not admit that there were colonial offers of troops to the British Government which were spontaneous and not 'manufactured'—at least not from London. The most important point is that through the independent actions of the Queensland commandant came the spontaneous offer that Chamberlain had sought in vain from New South Wales and Victoria.²⁷

Amongst the congratulatory telegrams to the Queensland Government was one from none other than Major-General French who, as a former commandant in Queensland, was 'glad to see my old force well to the front'.²⁸ The problem for the New South Wales commandant was to persuade his present government to follow suit, although he had not been idle in this area either. Throughout early July, the commandant had requested his regimental commanding officers to draw up lists of volunteers.²⁹ In an interview widely published throughout the Australian colonies on 14 July,³⁰ French could already claim that between 1200 and 1500 members of the New South Wales forces had volunteered to go to South Africa. In reaction to the news of the Queensland offer, he now advocated a self-sustaining federal force of between 2000 and 3000 men be sent in the event of war. He emphasised the 'merits' of sending an Australian contingent lay in the number of Australians employed in the Transvaal mines. Besides, continued French, there was the 'moral effect' of such action for the unity of the empire and upon the rest of the world who would see that 'Greater Britain, and not the British islands alone, has to be reckoned with.

French's public statements were therefore consistent with his private communication with the War Office, albeit until it came to the sensitive matter of expense. French told reporters that colonial troops would have to be paid at the same rate as the colony's permanent troops which was not what he had told the War Office a fortnight earlier. In congratulating the patriotic offer of Queensland, French concluded, 'There is a lot of enthusiasm on the subject in New South Wales also, and it only needs an offer to be made by the Government to ensure the organisation of a most valuable body of troops'. With this blatantly political statement the commandant had issued a challenge to the government.

During this newspaper interview, French had also alluded to volunteering in Canada and mentioned that, 'They also have at their head a thoroughly live man in Major-General Hutton'.³¹ In fact, however, Major-General Edward Hutton, the former New South Wales commandant and fervent imperialist, had been uncharacteristically slow off the mark.³² It was only after the Canadian Governor-General, Lord Minto, a close friend of Hutton since their days together at Eton, had informed the General Officer Commanding on 17 July of Chamberlain's request and asked him '*privately* the minimum force which Canada might reasonably contribute toward military operations in South Africa' that Hutton had swung into action.³³ It is not possible to ascertain whether the governors or the governments in New South Wales and Victoria similarly showed Chamberlain's request to their commandants, although French's actions antedate its arrival. Once primed, Hutton immediately drew up a scheme for the despatch of a self-contained Canadian contingent of 1200 men.³⁴ Despite his knowledge of the opposition of the Canadian Government to offering troops, Hutton nonetheless privately communicated his scheme direct to Chamberlain and assured the British colonial secretary that 'if the emergency arose I am well persuaded that the enthusiasm for military service would be spontaneous'.³⁵ Thus Hutton even spoke the same 'spontaneous' language as the British colonial secretary. The British officer was indeed now in the imperial loop over South Africa, something the commandants in Australia seem not to have enjoyed, and Hutton's actions in Canada certainly came closest to those of an imperial conspirator of which he was later suspected. It had been the governor-general and not the imperial authorities, however, that had requested Hutton for Canadian troops. Indeed, the British colonial secretary and the War Office hierarchy distanced themselves from Hutton's subsequent communications possibly to prevent any accusation of conspiracy in the future.³⁶

Like his counterparts in the antipodes, Hutton's own reasons for pressing for a Canadian contingent were far from disinterested. War in South Africa offered Hutton the opportunity to advance his career as well as the chance to command colonial troops in the Field and to demonstrate the qualities that he had praised with such hyperbole throughout the 1890s.³⁷ He later privately informed Chamberlain and the War Office hierarchy that as soon as the Canadian Government made a formal offer in the event of hostilities he intended to cable for the War Office's permission 'to offer my services to the Canadian Govt, for "employment with them, and if required with other Colonial Troops similarly employed"'.³⁸ In support of his own selection for this command, Hutton contended that his previous colonial experience would enable him to overcome 'the difficulties of handling Colonial Troops'. With characteristic immodesty, Hutton believed that his appointment would also 'gratify the Canadian people' while his 'old Australian comrades would be glad to again serve under me'. With London suitably primed, Hutton only needed the Laurier Government to offer a contingent and toward this end he launched himself into a public and private campaign 'to raise military enthusiasm and active patriotism' throughout Canada to a level of 'white heat'.³⁹ Laurier's tactic nonetheless remained, as one newspaper observed, to hold 'a block of ice to the back of Canada's neck'.⁴⁰

The New South Wales premier also had so far resisted the pressure being applied by Chamberlain, through Governor Beauchamp, as well as the independent manoeuvres of the commandant. Ironically, Premier George Reid utilised the numbers of volunteers collected by French to slip through the net. On 21 July, the premier informed the Colonial Office that some 1860 men from the New South Wales forces had volunteered although reiterating that his government was still not prepared to 'bear expenses'.⁴¹ Reid's 'offer' of troops enabled New South Wales to appear loyal while not committing the government to any action as he would later admit. Chamberlain was nonetheless delighted as the New South Wales volunteers met his requirements for a 'spontaneous' offer.⁴² While the British colonial secretary may have been satisfied, it was very unsatisfactory for the New South Wales commandant who would still be deprived of the chance of commanding a colonial contingent in South Africa.

In London, meanwhile, the imperial authorities were considering the general question of colonial contingents for South Africa. On 19 July, and in response to a request from the Colonial Office, the War Office laid down the ground rules for the acceptance of any troops which the Australian colonies might be willing to offer. It proposed that the British Government pick up the entire bill of any colonial military contribution, including the payment of the colonial troops 'at the existing rates of the permanent forces in the various colonies'.⁴³ The War Office envisaged New South Wales and Victoria sending two companies and the other colonies one each, either infantry or mounted infantry, limited to 1000 all ranks. In the event of the companies being formed into a single Australian battalion, the War Office made it clear to the Colonial Office that it would select the battalion commander, regimental staff, and also one officer per company. This last condition reveals that the War Office had initially contemplated the Australian colonial forces fighting as a federal force which they later would oppose.

The Colonial Office viewed these terms as 'ample' and urged the War Office to gain Treasury approval even though the colonial contingents in question had not been specifically offered.⁴⁴ Treasury refused, however, arguing that the present circumstances did not justify this expenditure particularly since the matter had not been before cabinet.⁴⁵ This reply reveals that elements of the British Government at this stage were no more prepared than the colonial governments to sanction Chamberlain's expensive gesture of imperial solidarity.

In late July, French's private communication finally reached the War Office. His recommendations were exactly what the British authorities wanted to receive and, in fact, brought about a rethink. Wolseley and the Secretary of State for War, Lord Lansdowne, were particularly interested in the commandant's view that colonial troops would be willing to serve on British Army rates of pay. The War Office forwarded French's letter to the Colonial Office with the suggestion that they may need to reconsider their proposal of 19 July which had suggested payment at the higher rates of colonial permanent troops.⁴⁶ 'Genl. French is likely to be right. We ought to press this most strongly', observed the permanent under-secretary for the colonies. 'We ought to press it & accept it in the event of an expedition', added Chamberlain.⁴⁷ The Colonial Office reply stated that French's 'position and experience gave much weight to the expression of his opinion' and that they agreed with the War Office that should it become necessary to renew the application to Treasury it would be advisable to modify the proposal concerning pay in accordance with the views of the New South Wales commandant. French also received a private reply in which, as he later recalled, 'I was just told generally, that it was favourably considered'.⁴⁸ There the matter remained, however, until the crisis required further action.⁴⁹ The impact of French's correspondence in London reveals the potential usefulness of the commandants to the imperial authorities although they were repeatedly under-utilised.

The relative silence of the British commandants from late July through to early September reflected a period whereby it seemed possible that the crisis might be settled by diplomacy; one suspects much to the anxiety of the commandants as it was for their aging patron Wolseley.⁵⁰ When news of the South African Republic's final rejection of the British ultimatum appeared in Australian newspapers on 18 September 1899, once more the commandants came to the fore. With the newly elected Lyne Government in New South Wales playing a waiting game the initiative within Australia passed to Victoria where once again it was the British commandant leading the call for military intervention.⁵¹

Major-General Sir C Holled Smith had served against the Boers in 1881 and experienced first hand the military humiliation of Majuba Hill.⁵² Whether intent on personal revenge or not, the Victorian commandant was certainly no less keen than his northern counterparts to see Australian troops on active service in South Africa. Back in mid July, and after weeks of unconfirmed reports of defence department circulars calling for volunteers, Holled Smith had publicly declared himself in favour of the colonies sending a united Australian force and had suggested to the government, albeit without success, his proposal be cabled to London.⁵³ Now, on 18 September with Melbourne's *Age* declaring 'BOERS FOR WAR!',⁵⁴ Holled Smith revealed in a warlike statement to the press the government's inaction during the previous months and relaunched his call for an Australian contingent with the suggestion of a meeting of his fellow commandants to arrange the details.⁵⁵ During the following days the Victorian

Government duly took the decision to begin enrolling volunteers—the first overt act of recruitment by a colonial government in the empire—and invited the other colonial governments to send their commandants to Melbourne.⁵⁶ The Victorian Government, as in Queensland, had acted on the advice of their commandant which as military adviser it was his job to provide but for whom it was also a matter of personal self-interest. As the senior military officer in Australia, Holled Smith would have expected to receive the command of any federal force sent to South Africa.

It seems by sheer coincidence the Queensland premier was also contemplating a federal force, except with his colony leading the way.⁵⁷ Upon receiving the Victorian invitation, Dickson suggested the commandants instead convene in Sydney where there would be less danger of the host government seeking to take the spotlight. Meanwhile, the New South Wales Government was reticent over the whole idea of a commandants' conference least its recommendations bind the government to sending a force. With assurances from the Victorian premier that the final decision would remain with the colonial government, Lyne reluctantly agreed to send French.⁵⁸ Dickson now had no choice but to accede to the fact that the conference would take place in Melbourne. By this time, however, he had already taken further measures to prevent Victoria from grabbing the initiative. Throughout August and September, the Queensland commandant had been busy preparing a contingent ready for active service.⁵⁹ On 21 September, and now aware of the Victorian proposal, Dickson cabled London for information required by Gunter together with a request for the earliest indication as to whether the contingent would be used.⁶⁰ This cable seems designed to elicit a definite decision by the British Government in order to enable Queensland to stand apart from any federal initiative which might result from the Melbourne conference.

By this stage, the South Australian cabinet had also independently offered to the British Government 'some members of South Australian Defence Forces'.⁶¹ Connolly admits that 'South Australia's offer may well have been largely spontaneous, but the evidence is inconclusive'.⁶² This is as close as Connolly can come to admitting that there were spontaneous offers because the evidence with regard South Australia simply does not support any other conclusion. The acting-commandant Colonel John Stuart, a colonial officer, had provided Kingston with a memorandum which outlined that 100 troops had verbally offered their services during July and August.⁶³ Generally, however, Stuart had not been as vigorous as his imperial colleagues in the eastern colonies. This reflected his appreciation of the limited role that his colony's small military forces would be able to play in an imperial war and which possibly explains the generally less active role of the commandants in the smaller colonies.⁶⁴ This also underlines why smaller colonies such as Tasmania and Western Australia were content to follow the lead of the larger ones and send their commandants to Melbourne.

The conference—or 'Australasian war cabinet' as one British journal described it⁶⁵—assembled at Victoria Barracks on Friday afternoon, 29 September 1899.⁶⁶ All the Australian colonial commandants attended: the aforementioned Major-Generals Holled Smith, French and Gunter as well as Colonel Stuart, together with Colonel GH Chippindall and Colonel WV Legge representing Western Australia and Tasmania respectively. Apart from Stuart and Legge, the commandants were all seconded British army officers. Duly elected president by virtue of his seniority, Holled Smith welcomed his fellow officers and alluded to the fact that 'as Federation was so near, it seemed to him a fortunate circumstance that the military forces should be the first to give effect to its principles'. But the labours of these colonial commandants were anything but federal in spirit. From the outset, the commandants from Queensland and New South Wales opposed a federal force. Gunter argued that since there was no federal authority there could be no federal force while French thought it would take too long, for the various colonial governments to sanction a federal force and that it would miss the action in South Africa.

These were legitimate concerns although there were other reasons behind their opposition. Apart from the objections of their respective governments to a federal force, French and Gunter would have realised that such a force would mean only one commandant going on active service and that both of them would undoubtedly lose out to Holled Smith, who apart

from being the senior officer possessed a distinguished service record including experience of Boer warfare. Although Imperial officers, the commandants could be as parochial as their governments for political as well as personal reasons. The varying views of the commandants further reveals that their attempts to pressure their respective governments to offer contingents were individual campaigns and no collective conspiracy on their part.

An exasperated Holled Smith questioned whether it was worth continuing but French and Gunter wanted to discuss uniform rates of pay and allowances which were important irrespective of whether a federal force was sent or not. The following day the Victorian Minister of Defence, William McCulloch, attended the meeting, undoubtedly at the request of Holled Smith, to remind the commandants of why they had been invited to Melbourne. The Queensland commandant was singled out as the main obstacle and eventually Gunter revealed that Queensland was in a different position from that of the other colonies as it had already 'pledged to send a force whether an Australian force is sent or not'. Despite Queensland's go-it-alone stance, McCulloch's appearance had fulfilled its purpose as the chastised commandants returned to their task with the understanding that the final decision would rest with their respective governments.

By Wednesday, 4 October, the commandants had drawn up a scheme for an Australian contingent of 2053 officers and men of all arms: general staff (30); 1 battery of field artillery (120); cavalry and mounted rifles (833); infantry (1010); and engineers and army departmental personnel (60).⁶⁷ The commandants' recommendation of a self-contained contingent, with a specifically large proportion of mounted troops, showed a commendable appreciation of the requirements of a campaign in southern Africa. Those present in Melbourne provided another explanation for their recommendation:

... if a sufficiently large force, representing all arms, be sent it will always remain intact as an Australian Contingent, capable of acting alone or in concert with the regular troops; but if a small force be sent, there is the probability of its being scattered amongst other corps of the regular service, or being tacked on to some other Colonial Contingent, and thus having its identity destroyed.

This demonstrates a genuine desire on the part of the commandants to develop a sense of national identity within the contingent which they realised would be significant to its esprit de corps in any campaign in South Africa but also important for the future development of the soon to be federated Australian colonial military forces. A distinctive Australian contingent would have a much better chance of fulfilling such an agenda than colonial units scattered all over southern Africa.⁶⁸ It was a policy also being pressed by Hutton who similarly looked forward to war in South Africa as a great fillip to his efforts to develop a 'Canadian Army'.⁶⁹ The desire of these seconded British army officers to see their colonial contingents fighting as 'national' forces was, however, at odds with the War Office.

By the end of September, the British authorities were deciding how to turn the generally vague offers of assistance from the colonies into a show of imperial solidarity. It had been a telegram from the Victorian Government on 20 September, informing the Colonial Office of many offers of service for South Africa and wishing to know whether the British Government would pay, which had got the ball rolling in London. Chamberlain reiterated to the War Office that unless the colonial force was 'representative and officially organized, it would be of no practical value'.⁷⁰ Two days later, Queensland's cable arrived urging a decision be taken on whether their offer would be taken up.⁷¹ On 27 September, the Colonial Office received another cable from Victoria requesting information on what type of troops would be required in anticipation of the commandants' conference.⁷²

At the War Office, Lansdowne was characteristically unenthusiastic about accepting colonial contingents since 'their presence means more sea & land transport, more expense, and more "congestion"'.⁷³ As already shown, however, Wolseley was a firm advocate for utilising colonial forces and his minute in favour of their acceptance is worth quoting at length as it also represents the views of the British officers in Canada and Australia (a number of whom, such as Hutton and Holled Smith, were his protégés):

From a military point of view, of course our own disciplined soldiers would be better men in front of any enemy than the bulk of these volunteers from the Colonies. But it would impress all foreign nations if we would have fighting alongside of our Regular Army, a fighting body representing all or most of our great Colonies. It would, I feel sure, draw those Colonies still closer to the mother Country by creating a new bond of union between all parts of our Empire. There is no bond more lasting or that appeals more to the imagination than the comradeship of fighting side by side in a national war. I can foresee such great things in the future for England if we bring our Colonies "*into Line*" with her in a dispute such as that we now have with the Transvaal, that I feel we should not make light of these offers of service, nor estimate their value by any mere weighing of them in a cold-blooded, tradesman-like fashion.

This passage again emphasises the potential political importance of colonial military, participation in South Africa. Turning to more practical considerations, however, Wolseley jotted down that Canada, New South Wales and Victoria might contribute between 100 and 500 troops each, while South Australia and Queensland between 50 and 100 for a total number of between 400 and 1700 troops. New Zealand, Tasmania and Western Australia did not figure in Wolseley's calculations as there had been no word from these colonies. The commander-in-chief had also overlooked the fact that Queensland had offered a much larger force although War Office officials were busy composing lists of the colonial responses to date.

These lists are most interesting because, besides the Queensland offer of 250 men, the offers from the other colonies had only been vague expressions of support—still this did not prevent the War Office from presuming to allocate numbers. Most interesting, the private recommendations of the British commanding officers in New South Wales and Canada were considered as potential military contributions from these colonies.⁷⁴ These calculations gave a grand total of 5300 colonial troops which was far in excess of what Wolseley had in mind to give a sense of imperial solidarity. In the end, the War Office went with the more cautious, as well as cost effective, proposal to accept only 1000 troops from the Australian colonies together with a further 500 troops from Canada which Wolseley and Sir Evelyn Wood had initially proposed back in mid July.⁷⁵

Some readjustment had to be undertaken with the arrival of a cable from New Zealand in late September offering a contingent of mounted rifles to be fully paid by the colony—another example of a spontaneous offer.⁷⁶ The colonies were beginning to slide into a race of imperial patriotism, and Premier Richard Seddon—who proudly proclaimed his colony's offer to be the first by a colonial legislature—wished to see a New Zealand contingent landed first in Cape Town.⁷⁷ It is difficult to ascertain what role the New Zealand commandant played in this offer due to a lack of sources, although with a pragmatic imperialist such as Seddon at the head of government the New Zealand commandant did not have to go to the same lengths as some of his colleagues across the Tasman to obtain this official military commitment.

On 2 October 1899, the War Office finally informed the Colonial Office of the terms on which it would accept colonial contingents.⁷⁸ The War Office accepted the specific offers from Queensland and New Zealand and laid down numbers for the other colonies which Lansdowne 'would be glad to accept'. A total of 1575 colonial troops would be accepted with Canada to send 500 men; Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria 250 each; New Zealand 200 and South Australia 125, to be organised into units of 125 men and with no officer of higher rank than major. Tasmania and Western Australia were not mentioned since there had still been no word from these colonies although probably also because of the insignificant size of their military forces.

With regard to the numbers, Lansdowne explained that he had been guided by the nature of the offers already received together with a desire to see each colony fairly represented. There is a problem with this explanation since only Queensland and New Zealand had offered troops, which Lansdowne acknowledged, but nonetheless there were references to specific numerical offers of troops from Victoria and South Australia which had not been made. The other factor which guided the War Office was 'the limits which must necessarily be imposed

on such a force if it is to be fully utilized under the Staff at our disposal as an integral portion of Her Majesty's Forces in South Africa'. In other words, as Lansdowne later admitted,⁷⁹ colonial troops had to be in units small enough to be attached to (indeed absorbed into) British regular units. With regard to the type of troops requested, in the case of Queensland and New Zealand the offers and acceptance were of mounted infantry, but the other colonies were to supply 'either Infantry, Mounted Infantry, or Cavalry. In view of the numbers of these arms already available Infantry will be of most and Cavalry of least service'. Finally, colonial troops from the date of disembarkation in Cape Town would be treated as an integral part of the British forces and provided the same pay, allowances and pensions as regular soldiers.

In his evidence to the Elgin Commission after the war, French immodestly claimed that his letter to the War Office in late June had been responsible for these 'proper arrangements' which had in turn led to the rapid and successful organisation of the first colonial contingents as they had 'set at rest the men's fears as regards pay or pension, wound expenses, or compassionate allowance for their families, and so forth, and had largely helped the Colonial Governments in going to their local Parliaments to provide funds in the early portion of the campaign'.⁸⁰ The fact is that much of this detail had been worked out before French's correspondence had arrived at the War Office.⁸¹ The one condition which was significantly different and influenced by his advice, however, was that of pay.⁸² It will be recalled that French had privately assured the War Office that colonial troops would serve for British army rates of pay while simultaneously expressing in Sydney that he expected them to receive the pay of colonial permanent soldiers.

What is the explanation for French's contradictory comments? It would appear that the commandant was trying to secure payment of his proposed colonial contingent at imperial rates of pay by the British Government as a form of subsidisation to reduce the cost of a contingent to the colonial government—thereby making it more likely that New South Wales would be represented in South Africa.⁸³ Thus French not only went behind the back of his own colonial government but possibly also purposely misled the British authorities in order to obtain his personal goal of active service. This is not the end of the story, however, for what French had not known was that the War Office, prior to receiving his advice, had decided to meet the total cost of colonial participation in South Africa and, moreover, to pay the colonial troops at the rates paid to colonial permanent soldiers. The effective outcome of French's secret communication, therefore, was the cost not only to his own government but to all of the colonial governments of the difference between the British and colonial rates of pay (at least in the case of the initial contingents) for colonial troops did not serve for the Queen's shilling and their pay had to be topped up by the colonial governments.⁸⁴ Fortunately, his colonial political masters did not learn of his private and costly intervention or else Major-General French might have ended his career being recalled to London at the behest of the colonial government. This episode highlights the very bungled nature of French's intervention.

The Colonial Office immediately cabled a summation of the War Office's conditions of service to the colonies on 3 October.⁸⁵ The cable immediately brought an end to the commandants' conference in Melbourne as its instructions had 'upset the whole thing' so French recalled to the Elgin Commission after the war.⁸⁶ He made a special point of informing the commissioners that the War Office directions over numbers and in favour of infantry over mounted troops were 'rather opposed to the views of the Commandants out there'.⁸⁷ Most importantly, the War Office directions sunk any hopes held by the commandants of their colonial forces fighting as 'national' units.⁸⁸ The fact that the commandants were planning to send a federal force while the War Office wanted small colonial units provides the greatest proof of the total lack of communication between London and the commandants and therefore of any imperial conspiracy.

The confusion over the infamous directive 'infantry most, cavalry least serviceable' provides another example of the lack of any communication. This extraordinary instruction which was severely criticised in the light of the campaign in South Africa was vigorously pursued by the Elgin Commission. Sir Redvers Buller told the commissioners that he had been responsible for the statement. Had Buller forgotten what Hutton had told him back at the time of the Jamieson Raid: 'Don't forget if you want men to lick the Boers ... you have a magnificent

description of Mounted Troops here in Australia, but especially NS Wales!⁸⁹ Both Buller and Lansdowne represented to the Elgin Commission the infamous clause as a move designed to ward off unwanted amateur cavalry who were viewed as incompetent and not, as the Elgin Commission concluded, 'to discourage the Colonies from sending mounted infantry, or men capable of being turned into mounted infantry'.⁹⁰ The sincerity of this explanation is supported by the fact that the proposals of the War Office together with Chamberlain's request back in July were for mounted infantry, but moreover by the actual acceptance of the offers of mounted infantry from Queensland and New Zealand. 'Both Lord Lansdowne and Lord Wolseley admitted', as the Elgin Commission noted, 'that the telegram in question may have been rather unfortunately worded, so as to convey a wrong impression of their meaning'.⁹¹ If the War Office had been in communication with the commandants this misinterpretation would surely have been avoided.⁹²

With the cable of 3 October, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, and New Zealand concentrated on organising their own contingents and passing the legislation to despatch them. The smaller colonies of Tasmania and Western Australia now also quickly offered contingents which the British authorities duly accepted.⁹³ The waverers—Canada and New South Wales—were now confronted with an application which not only thanked them for offers not made but told them how many men to send. Who had made these offers? It placed French and Hutton in a potentially awkward position because of their privately communicated offers of troops to the Imperial authorities. Unlike in Canada, however, the New South Wales Government does not seem to have suspected its commandant as they knew nothing of French's secret communication and, in any case, an official offer of sorts had been made back in July with Reid's notification that a specific number of troops were willing to volunteer for service.⁹⁴ It seemed inevitable that the Lyne Government would now follow the other colonies and send a contingent, but an offer to volunteer from the detachment of New South Wales Lancers in England certainly provided further pressure in this direction.

Connolly claims that French colluded with Lieutenant-Colonel James Burns, commanding officer of the Lancers, in a 'plot' to ensure active service for the regiment and which he describes as 'even more devious' than French's clandestine correspondence with the War Office.⁹⁵ However, Connolly does not provide one shred of evidence in support of his claim against French. On the contrary, French later berated Burns for the failure of a large percentage of his regiment to 'avail themselves of the opportunity (so sought after by other branches of the Force) of seeing Active Service in South Africa'.⁹⁶ Admittedly, French would have approved of the plot between Burns and Captain Charles Cox, the officer commanding the Lancer detachment in England, if he had known of it. The evidence overwhelmingly points to the initiative for the offer coming from Cox as early as June, who during the following months bullied his men into volunteering, roped in Burns and the regiment's honorary colonel, Lord Carrington, into his plan, and deceived the British authorities, all with the aim of securing the opportunity of active service and thereby living up to his later nickname 'fighting Charlie'.⁹⁷ The episode moreover illustrates that Australian colonial officers were just as eager to see active service as their British commandants and just as inclined to use duplicity to get their way.

After months of agitation on the part of the imperial officers to secure colonial participation in South Africa, it is ironic that when the contingents finally set sail in late October the commandants were left behind on the wharves. Apart from the War Office prohibition against officers above the rank of major being sent, the imperial military authorities believed that the commandants were required *in situ* to oversee the proper arrangements of the contingents.⁹⁸ The commandants thus remained behind and worked extremely hard throughout the war to oversee the difficult task of preparing the contingents which for the most part they did a commendable job.⁹⁹ The public farewells to successive contingents were particularly gruelling for the commandants with the realisation that they themselves were unlikely to see service in South Africa although not for a want of trying.¹⁰⁰ It is not surprising that the indefatigable French repeatedly requested permission to get away to South Africa, even offering to serve below his rank such was his desperation, but all to no avail.¹⁰¹

One officer who did take part in the South African War was Major-General Hutton, but not because of his endless pleas or in his capacity as the Canadian GOC. The War Office gave him a posting to South Africa as a means of extricating him from Canada with his public reputation intact. For the Laurier Government's suspicions over Hutton's involvement in a clandestine campaign to ensure Canadian participation in South Africa had led to a rapid deterioration of relations and eventually to moves to have the general recalled.¹⁰² Once in Africa, Hutton took command of a mounted brigade of nearly 6000 troops which included British regular units as well as the Canadian, Australian and New Zealand mounted contingents. 'It realises my dream of the last 10 years', Hutton told his wife on the day that Lord Roberts informed him of his command, adding that, 'The responsibility is very great, quite as much political and imperial, as it is military'.¹⁰³ Indeed, Mutton's command was the first truly British imperial military force in history, establishing a pattern of military co-operation in the field that was to be repeated throughout the twentieth century. Hutton himself was only too aware of the historical significance of his command at the time:

It requires an intimate knowledge of our Colonies to realize how far reaching will be the effect of this campaign not for this generation only, but for the next 50 years, and how every incident and every fact connected with it will be a subject of story and criticism in every farm and in every cattle station from the Distant Prairie of Canada to the barren plains of central Australia.

[...] I have good reason to be sanguine of success. God grant it may be so, as the importance of such success is beyond all words of mine to describe. Beyond doubt it will go far towards bringing forward that consolidation of the Empire, which so many of us are striving to achieve, and which in some crisis not far distant perhaps will prove the salvation of the mother country and her children.¹⁰⁴

It was a realisation shared by the commandants in Australia.

What then is the verdict of the role of British commandants in the colonial offers of troops to the South African War, and specifically did the commandants force the hand of their respective governments? This view was expressed at the time by very few people and although eagerly recited by some historians it gives far too much credit to the influence of the commandants over colonial society. The fact is that the commandants did not force the colonial governments to offer troops but did contribute to that decision together with a multitude of other factors, not least the growing public sympathy for participation in the colonies. The tens of thousands who enthusiastically poured onto the streets of the colonial capitals throughout late October to farewell the first colonial contingents surely cannot be dismissed as 'manufactured'? Recent historical research into the Canadian involvement in the South African War supports this conclusion. In his definitive study, *Painting the Map Red*, Carman Miller concludes that the decision of the Canadian Government to send troops to South Africa was 'a reluctant, politically motivated, capitulation to the strident demands of Canada's pro-war advocates, not the clandestine machinations of a handful of imperial conspirators'.¹⁰⁵ If this is the latest finding over the Canadian decision to send troops—where traditionally the claims of an imperial conspiracy have been most profound—then the conclusion of this paper that the commandants contributed to the Australian decision to offer troops but were not the decisive factor suggests an accurate reappraisal. The most important point to note, however, is that there was no London-inspired conspiracy with the commandants although the simultaneous clandestine actions of officers such as Major-General French have given this impression. On the contrary, the manoeuvres of the commandants were independent initiatives motivated largely by their imperial aspirations for the colonial forces and their personal desire for active service. As far as the historiography of the Australian colonial offers of troops is concerned, therefore, no doubt it was not as 'spontaneous' as early historians have claimed but nor was it as 'manufactured' as later revisionists have argued.

Endnotes

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1. CN Connolly, 'Manufacturing "Spontaneity": The Australian Offers of Troops for the Boer War', *Historical Studies* 18: 70 (April 1978), 106-17; and LM Field, *The Forgotten War: Australian involvement in the South African conflict of 1899-1902* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1979), chapter 1; see also JL Mordike, *An Army for a Nation: A History of Australian Military Developments, 1880-1914* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin in association with the Directorate of Army Studies, 1992), 60-62. For an examination of the historiography see Peter Dennis et al, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1995), 106. This paper is also indebted to the relatively unknown BJ Bridges, 'New South Wales and the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902', unpub PhD thesis, University of South Africa, 1981.
2. For the general history of the South African War the best modern study remains Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979).
3. Minute by Wolseley, 8 June 1899, printed in 'Report of His Majesty's Commissioners appointed to inquire into the military preparations and other matters connected with the War in South Africa', 9 July 1903, 15-16, Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1904, vol 40 (Command 1789) [hereafter cited as RCWSA— Report]. For discussion of Wolseley's minute see Pakenham, *The Boer War*, chapter 7.
4. 'Confidential—Report of a Conference between The Right Hon Joseph Chamberlain, MP (Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies), and the Premiers of the Self-Governing Colonies of the Empire, at the Colonial Office, Downing Street, London, SW, in June and July 1897', 2-6, CO Confidential Print Misc No 111, CO 885/6, Public Record Office, Kew/Australian Joint Copying Project [hereinafter PRO/AJCP].
5. On 9 June 1899, Chamberlain drafted a letter suggesting that if it came to war the self-governing colonies should join with the mother country to assert British supremacy in South Africa, although it was not sent: J L Garvin, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, vol 3 (London: Macmillan, 1934), 527. Australian, Canadian and New Zealand historians have been unaware of this evidence of the intentions of Wolseley and Chamberlain as early as June while Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 70, ignores its colonial dimension.
6. For the full text of Chamberlain's handwritten secret draft telegrams to the Governors of New South Wales and Victoria sent on 3 July 1899, see CO [internal], 3 July 1899, Australia (General) No 17213, CO 418/ 6, PRO/AJCP. The emphasis is mine.
7. This is further evident from the fact that Chamberlain requested detachments from only the New South Wales Lancers and the Victorian Mounted Rifles together with a few Canadian troops.
8. Copy of Chamberlain to Minto, Secret, 3 July 1899, Hutton Papers (hereinafter HP), vol 2, Add Mss 50079, 143-44, British Library (Note: a microfilm copy of the Hutton Papers is held at the Australian Defence Force Academy Library, Canberra). For the differing expectations of Wolseley and Chamberlain see Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 78-79.
9. Major-General GA French to Colonel [George] Gough, 27 July 1899 [sic 27 June 1899], File No 079/8809, WO 32/8208, PRO/AJCP. Connolly, 'Manufacturing "Spontaneity"', 113, and Bridges, 'New South Wales and the Anglo-Boer War', 54-55, both cite French's letter while Field was not aware of its existence because he confined his research to Australian sources.
10. *Daily Telegraph*, Sydney, 26 June 1899, 5; Field, *The Forgotten War*, 10.
11. Major-General Sir George Arthur French (1841-1921). Educated RMC, Sandhurst, and RMA, Woolwich. Commissioned Lieutenant Royal Artillery, 1860; Captain, 1872; Major, 1881; Lieutenant-Colonel, 1887; Colonel, 1892; Colonel, 1894; Major-General, 1900. Adjutant Kingston, Canada 1862-66; Inspector of Warlike Stores Quebec, 1869-71; Inspector of Artillery, Canada 1871-73; First Commissioner North-West Mounted Police 1873-76; Inspector Warlike Stores Devonport, 1878-83; Commandant Queensland Defence Forces, 1883-91; Commanding Royal Artillery Dover, 1891-92; Chief Instructor School of Gunnery, Shoeburyness, 1892-93; Colonel on Staff and Brigadier-General RA Bombay, 1894-96; Commandant New South Wales Military Forces, 1896-1901. No war service. Retired full pay, 1902. CMG, 1877; KCMG, 1902. Colonel-Commandant Royal Artillery, 1912-21.
12. For French's 'war reserve' scheme see French to Wolseley, 1 May 1900, File No 091/2180, WO 32/8302; see also File No 266/59, WO 32/6365, PRO/AJCP.
13. Bridges, 'New South Wales and the Anglo-Boer War', 55, observes that the size of the force seems overly optimistic although French may have been thinking of a united Australian force which he publicly declared himself in favour a few weeks later.
14. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 January 1902, 6; see a similar reference in Field, *The Forgotten War*, 10.
15. Connolly, 'Manufacturing "Spontaneity"', 113, and Bridges, 'New South Wales and the Anglo-Boer War', 54-55. The typed copies of French's letter in the War Office and Colonial Office files are dated 27 July 1899 which is an obvious clerical error because Wolseley's first minute on this letter is dated 31 July 1899 see File No 079/8809, WO 32/8208, PRO/AJCP. French also discusses his 'letter addressed to Colonel Gough, from Sydney, of the 27th of June, 1899' in 'Minutes of Evidence taken before the

- Royal Commission on the War in South Africa', vol 1, 340, paras 8019-22, Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1904, vol 41 (Command 1790) [hereinafter RCWSA—Evidence].
16. Gov NSW to SS Cols, Telegrams 5, 9, 12, 14 July 1899, NSW Nos 17284, 17790, 18083, 18303, CO 201/625; Gov Vic to SS Cols, Telegrams, 5, 12 July 1899, Vic No 17285, 18082, CO 309/148, PRO/AJCP.
17. For evidence of this being the main reason for both governments' reluctance see Gov Vic to SS Cols, Secret, 2 August 1899, Vic No 23754, CO 309/148, PRO/AJCP. It is also the conclusion of Field, *The Forgotten War*, 11 -12; Connolly, 'Manufacturing "Spontaneity"', 110; and Bridges, 'New South Wales and the Anglo-Boer War', 50-1.
18. Minute by JA [Anderson], 14 July 1899, filed with WO to CO, 13 July 1899, Vic No 18218, CO 309/148; see also minutes by EW [Wingfield], and JC (Chamberlain), both 10 July 1899, filed with Gov NSW to SS Cols, Telegram, 9 July 1899, NSW No 17790, CO 201/625, PRO/AJCP.
19. Major-General Howel Gunter (1844-1902) Educated RMC, Sandhurst. Commissioned Ensign 73rd Regiment of Foot, 1862; Lieutenant, 1865; Captain, 1874, Major Royal Highlanders (Black Watch), 1881; Lieutenant-Colonel Norfolk Regiment, 1891; Colonel, 1895. Service in China, 1866-68; Straits Settlement, 1868-89; India, 1873-85; Burma, 1891-94. Commandant Queensland Defence Forces, 1895-1900. No war service. Unattached list, 1900. Colonel-Commandant 63rd Regimental District, Ashton-under-Lyne.
20. Major-General Gunter to Chief Secretary Qld, 6 July 1899, printed in 'Queensland Troops for the Transvaal', 1, *Queensland Votes & Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly*, 1899 (2nd Session), vol I, A 35 (hereinafter 'Queensland Troops for the Transvaal').
21. Chief Secretary to Gov Qld, 10 July 1899, GOV/A35, Queensland State Archives, Brisbane; and Gov Qld to SS Cols, Telegram, 10 July 1899, Qld No 17905, CO 234/68, PRO/AJCP.
22. McDonald and Browne in Queensland *Parliamentary Debates*, 1899, vol 82, 340, 350 (11 October 1899); Field, *The Forgotten War*, 13.
23. Premier Dickson in Qld *PD*, 1899, vol 82, 340 (11 October 1899). Headquarters did receive an offer to serve in South Africa from two infantry officers on the day of Gunter's proposal but none as such from mounted infantry units: see OC A Company 3rd Regiment to Queensland Defence Forces Headquarters, 1 July 1899, letter presumed destroyed but registered on 6 July 1899 in 'Register of letters received Queensland Defence Forces Headquarters (respecting the South African Contingents)', DEF/2, entry No 2211 (now Microfilm Z4199), Queensland State Archives, Brisbane.
24. Connolly, 'Manufacturing "Spontaneity"', 109.
25. See telegram drafted by EHW [Wingfield], 11 July 1899, filed with Gov Qld to SS Cols, Telegram, 10 July 1899, Qld No 17905, CO 234/68, PRO/AJCP.
26. Minute by JA [Anderson], 11 July 1899, filed with Gov Qld to SS Cols, Telegram, 10 July 1899, Qld No 17905, CO 234/68, PRO/AJCP.
27. Field, *The Forgotten War*, 14.
28. French to Premier Dickson, 14 July 1899, PRE/A28,1899/2352, QSA, which Dickson noted in his diary on 14 July 1899, Dickson Papers, OM67-13, item 4, Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane.
29. AAG NSW to OC 3rd NSW Infantry Regiment, 14 July 1899, AWM1, item 14/1, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, see also *Daily Telegraph*, 11, 17 July 1899, 5, which alludes to a 'circular' or 'call of arms' from 'Headquarters' while the *Colonial Military Gazette*, Sydney, 15 July 1899, 43, criticises the practice of requesting volunteers as 'undignified'; also Field, *The Forgotten War*, 10-11.
30. The following account is taken from the fuller report in the *Argus*, 14 July 1899, 5; see also *Daily Telegraph*, 14 July 1899, 5; *Brisbane Courier*, 14 July 1899, 5; *Adelaide Advertiser*, 14 July 1899, 5; and *Colonial Military Gazette*, 29 July 1899, 57.
31. RA Preston, *Canada and 'Imperial Defense': A study of the origins of the British Commonwealth's defense organization, 1867-1919* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1967), 260-61, singled out French and Hutton as being particularly vocal officers over the possible contribution of colonial aid but did not go into detail.
32. Lieutenant-General Sir Edward Thomas Henry Hutton (1848-1923). Educated Eton, Commissioned Ensign 60th Rifles (King's Royal Rifle Corps), 1867; Captain, 1879; Major, 1883; Lieutenant-Colonel, 1889; Colonel, 1893; Major-General, 1901; Lieutenant-General, 1907. Passed Staff College (psc), 1881. DAAG Aldershot, 1887-92; ADC to Queen Victoria, 1893; Commandant New South Wales Military Forces, 1893-96; AAG Ireland, 1896-98; GOC Canadian Militia, 1898-1900, GOC Commonwealth Military Forces, 1901-04; General Administering Eastern Command and GOC 3rd British Division, 1905-06. Served South African War, 1879-81 (Zulu and Transvaal Campaigns, mentioned despatches), Egyptian Expedition, 1882; Sudan Expedition, 1884-85 (mentioned despatches); South African War, 1899-1902 (mentioned despatches). Reward for Distinguished and Meritorious Service, 1904. Retired 1907. Recalled to organise 21st Division during the First World War but resigned command in early 1915 due to ill-health. CB, 1894; KCMC, 1900; KCB, 1912. Colonel-Commandant King's Royal Rifle Corps 1908-23; Colonel 6th Battalion Special Reserve King's Royal Rifle Corps, Honorary Colonel 4th Light Horse (NSW Northern Rivers Lancers) and 9th Light Horse (NSW Mounted Rifles); Deputy Lord-Lieutenant of Surrey.
33. Mentioned in Hutton to Chamberlain, Confidential, 28 July 1899, HP, vol 1, Add Mss 50078, 178-87.
34. Hutton to Minto, Confidential, 17 July 1899, HP, vol 2, Add Mss 50079, 151-57.

35. Hutton to Chamberlain, Confidential, 28 July 1899, HP, vol 1, Add Mss 50078, 178-87.
36. Chamberlain to Hutton, 14 August 1899, HP, vol 1, Add Mss 50078, 188-89, simply acknowledges Hutton's letter of 28 July 1899 without even a mention of South Africa. The War Office hierarchy did not even reply.
37. KTH Hutton, 'Our Comrades of Greater Britain', *United Service Magazine*, London, February 1897, 524-49, and ETH Hutton, 'A Co-operative System for the Defence of the Empire', *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute* 29 (1897-98), 223-58.
38. Hutton to Wolseley, 4 September 1899, File No 079/9073, WO 32/8208, PRO/AJCP, also a copy together with a similar letter to Wood, 1 September 1899, HP, vol 9, Add Mss 50086, 130-5, 199-208; and another to Chamberlain, 4 September 1899, vol 1 Add Mss 50078, 190-92; and for mention of sending another copy to Buller see Hutton to Minto, 3 September 1899, vol 2, Add Mss 50079, 198-200.
39. Memoirs, HP, vol 36, Add Mss 50113, 151.
40. *Bobcaygeon Independent*, 14 October 1899, cited in C Miller, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Montreal and Kingston: Canadian War Museum/McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 41.
41. Gov NSW to SS Cols, Telegram, 21 July 1899, NSW No 19112, CO 201/625, PRO/AJCP.
42. Chamberlain to Beauchamp, 31 August 1899, Beauchamp Papers, A3012, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.
43. WO to CO, Secret & Immediate, 19 July 1899, Australia (General) No 18813, CO 418/6; for the War Office minutes see File No 079/8758, WO 32/8207, PRO/AJCP.
44. Minute by JA [Anderson], 19 July 1899, filed with WO to CO, Secret & Immediate, 19 July 1899, Australia (General) No 18813, CO 418/6; and CO to WO, 20 July 1899, File No 079/8782, WO 32/8207, PRO/AJCP.
45. WO to Treasury, 21 July 1899, File No 079/8758, and Treasury to WO, 21 July 1899, WO No 079/8783, WO 32/8207; also enclosed with WO to CO, Secret & Immediate, 26 July 1899, Australia (General) No 19641, CO 418/6, PRO/AJCP.
46. Minutes by Wolseley, 31 July 1899, and L [Lansdowne], 1 August 1899, File No 079/8809, WO 32/8208; and WO to CO, 8 August 1899, Australia (General) No 20939, CO 201/626, PRO/AJCP.
47. Minutes by EW [Wingfield], 10 August 1899, and JC [Chamberlain], 12 August 1899, filed with WO to CO, 8 August 1899, Australia (General) No 20939, CO 201/626, PRO/AJCP.
48. French refers to a reply in RCWSA—Evidence Vol 1, 340, paragraph 8023. Connolly, 'Manufacturing "Spontaneity"', 13, and Bridges, 'New South Wales and the Anglo-Boer War', 55, argue that the War Office provided French with a definite assurance that they would pay Australian colonial troops at imperial rates and meet the cost of transport and rations, although without the correspondence there is no evidence for this claim.
49. CO to WO, 15 August 1899, together with minutes, File No 079/8850, WO 32/8208, PRO/AJCP.
50. For Wolseley's gloom over the prospect of peace see Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 78.
51. The Lyne government was reluctant to make any decision until parliament reconvened in mid October, wary of the controversy that had surrounded the offer of the contingent to the Sudan Expedition back in 1885: Field, *The Forgotten War*, 18, and Bridges, 'New South Wales and the Anglo-Boer War', 57-59.
52. Major-General Sir Charles Halled Smith (1846-1925). Purchased commission as Ensign 60th Foot (King's Royal Rifle Corps), 1865; Lieutenant, 1869; Captain, 1877; Major, 1882; Lieutenant-Colonel, 1885; Colonel, 1892; Major-General, 1900. Employed Egyptian army, 1883-92; Governor-General Red Sea Littoral and Commandant Suakim, 1888-92; Commandant Victoria Military Forces, 1894-1899. Served South African War, 1879-81 (Zulu and Transvaal Campaigns; mentioned despatches); Egyptian Expedition, 1882 (mentioned despatches, brevet Maj); Sudan Expedition, 1884-85 (mentioned despatches, brevet Lieutenant-Colonel), Sudan Expedition, 1888-91 (mentioned despatches, brevet Colonel). Half-pay, 1900; retired, 1905. Reward for Distinguished and Meritorious Service, 1904. CB, 1891; KCMG, 1892. Honorary Colonel 70th Australian Regiment (Ballarat).
53. *Age*, Melbourne, 12 July 1899, 7; Defence Department circulars mentioned in *Argus*, 28 June 1899, 7.
54. *Age*, 18 September 1899, 5.
55. *Argus*, 19 September 1899, 5.
56. The decision to enroll volunteers is conveyed in Secretary of Defence Vic to Halled Smith, 20 September 1899, CRS A6443, item 421, National Archives of Australia, Canberra; for the commandants' conference see Premier Vic to Premier NSW, Confidential Telegram, 20 September 1899, 'Contingents to South Africa', 40, NSW VPLA, 1900, vol 3 (hereinafter 'Contingents to South Africa').
57. Premier Qld to Premier NSW, Confidential Telegram, 19 September 1899, 'Contingents to South Africa', 39. The Queensland telegram does not appear to have influenced the Victorian proposal: see discussion of it by the Victorian defence minister at the subsequent commandants' conference: *ibid.*, 52.
58. Premier Vic to Premier NSW, Telegram, 21 September 1899, 'Contingents to South Africa', 40.
59. See correspondence between Gunter and the Chief Secretary between 3 August and 20 September 1899 printed in 'Queensland Troops for the Transvaal', 3-9.
60. Chief Secretary to Gov Qld, 21 September 1899, enclosing Commandant to Chief Secretary, 20 September 1899, GOV/A35, QSA; and Gov Qld to SS Cols, Telegram, 22 September 1899, Qld No 25418, CO 234/68, PRO/AJCP.

61. Gov SA to SS Cols, Telegram, 4 September 1899, SA No 23578, CO 13/153, PRO/AJCP.
62. Connolly, 'Manufacturing "Spontaneity"', 111.
63. Field, *The Forgotten War*, 26.
64. See Stuart's comments in *Daily Telegraph*, 17 July 1899, 5.
65. *Navy and Army Illustrated* 9: 154 (13 January 1900), 453.
66. The following discussion of the conference is derived from its proceedings printed as an appendix to 'Contingents to South Africa', 50-55.
67. Report of the Conference of Military Commandants, held at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne, on the 28th September, 1899, and the following days, 4 October 1899, CRS A6443, item 285, National Archives of Australia, Canberra.
68. See statement by Holled Smith at the conference: 'Contingents to South Africa', 50.
69. Memoirs, HP, vol 36, Add Mss 50113, 150.
70. CO to WO, Secret & Immediate, 21 September 1899, forwarding telegram from Gov Vic to SS Cols, 20 September 1899, filed with File No 079/9112, WO 32/8208, PRO/AJCP.
71. Gov Qld to SS Cols, Telegram, 22 September 1899, Qld No 25418, CO 234/68, PRO/AJCP.
72. Gov Vic to SS Cols, Telegram, 27 September 1899, Vic No 25975, CO 309/148 PRO/AJCP.
73. Minute by L [Lansdowne], 25 September 1899, File No 079/9112, WO 32/8208, PRO/AJCP.
74. New South Wales had officially indicated that 1860 troops had volunteered for service but a War Office official nonetheless went with French's private assurance that the colony could send a force of 2500 strong. Similarly, despite the strong doubts of the Canadian governor-general that his government would approve of despatching Hutton's proposed field force of 1200 men, the same official noted that 'Maj Gen Hutton says it is "practically certain" that [the] Government will offer a contingent'.
75. Minutes in File No 079/9112, WO 32/8208, PRO/AJCP.
76. Gov NZ to SS Cols, Telegram, 28 September 1899, NZ No 26243, CO 209/259; see also Gov NZ to SS Cols, 29 September 1899, NZ No 30214, CO 209/259, PRO/AJCP.
77. Ian McGibbon, *The Path to Gallipoli: Defending New Zealand 1840-1915* (Wellington- Government Print Books, 1991), 106-9; J Crawford with E Ellis, *To Fight for the Empire: An Illustrated History of New Zealand and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Wellington: Reed in association with the Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1999), 12.
78. WO to CO, 2 October 1899, Australia (General) No 26740, CO 418/6, PRO/AJCP.
79. Lansdowne in the House of Lords on 13 February 1902, cited in RCWSA—Report, 77-78.
80. RCWSA—Evidence, vol 2, 340-41, paras 8024, 8033.
81. Compare the conditions in WO to CO, 19 July 1899, Australia (General) No 18813, CO 418/6, with WO to CO, 2 October 1899, Australia (General) No 26740, CO 418/6, PRO/AJCP.
82. See a minute referring to French's advice on pay in File No 079/9112, WO 32/8208, PRO/AJCP.
83. French is reported on 7 July 1899 as saying that if the colonial troops went to South Africa they would only receive the imperial rates of pay which one week later he contradicts with a statement that they would receive the pay of colonial permanent soldiers: *Argus*, 7, 14 July 1899, both 5. It is uncertain whether French really believed colonial troops would serve overseas for imperial pay. Later in 1899, he denounced the CDC's policy to raise an Australian regiment of the British Army because he did not believe colonial troops would serve for imperial pay: French to PUS Chief Secretary NSW, 25 November 1899, enclosed with Gov NSW to SS Cols, Secret, 15 December 1899, NSW No 2410, CO 201/625, PRO/AJCP. On the other hand, the Lancers had offered to serve in India for imperial rates of pay back in 1897.
84. Bridges, 'New South Wales and the Anglo-Boer War', 55.
85. Queensland and New Zealand receiving slightly different telegrams in recognition of their specific offers. Copies of the Telegrams to Gov Qld, Gov N Z, Gov SA, and Gov-Gen Canada all sent on 3 October 1899, are found in File No 079/9295, WO 32/8209; a full copy of the War Office's letter of 2 October was sent to the colonies in SS Cols to Goves NZ, Qld, SA, NSW, Vic, and Gov-Gen Canada, 5 October 1899, filed with WO to CO, 2 October 1899, Australia (General) No 26740, CO 418/6, PRO/AJCP.
86. RCWSA—Evidence, vol 1 342, paras 8056-57.
87. *Ibid*, 341, para 8030.
88. Copy of Hutton to Minto, Telegram, 16 October 1899, HP, vol 2, Add Mss 50079, 238-39.
89. Hutton to Buller, 19 January 1896, HP, vol 9, Add Mss 50086, 95-96.
90. RCWSA—Report, 77-8.
91. *Ibid*, 78.
92. The South Australian commandant, Colonel JM Gordon, working in London at this time, in fact, was not even consulted: JM Gordon, *The Chronicles of a Gay Gordon* (London Cassell, 1921), 233-34.
93. Gov WA to S Cols, Telegram, 5 October 1899, together with minutes, WA No 26944, CO 18/226; for Tasmania see Gov Tas to SS Cols, Telegrams, 9, 12 October 1899, Tas Nos 27120, 27819, and Gov Tas to SS Cols, 23 October 1899, Tas No 32830, CO 280/402, and for the War Office's acceptance see WO to CO, 11, 17 October 1899, Tas Nos 27598, 28412, CO 280/402, PRO/AJCP.
94. Carman Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, 41 -8; Desmond Morton, *Ministers and Generals: Politics and the Canadian Militia, 1868-1904* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 153-54.
95. Connolly, 'Manufacturing "Spontaneity"', 113.

96. AAG NSW to OC NSW Lancers, 23 November 1899, AWM1, item 14/1, Australian War Memorial, Canberra.
97. For an account of this episode see Bridges, *New South Wales and the Anglo-Boer War*, 49-50.
98. For the War Office attitude toward the commandants' requests to go in command of their colonial contingents see minute by Lansdowne, 21 September 1899, File No 079/9073, WO 32/8208, PRO/AJCP. The South Australian commandant, Colonel JM Gordon, did manage to wrangle a posting in South Africa as a special service officer but then he was a retired British officer and already had been absent from his command for two years in his capacity as inspector of warlike stores in London: Gordon, *The Chronicles of a Gay Gordon*, 232-33.
99. It was 'arduous work', recalled the Victorian commandant: 'Sketch', 46-77, Major-General MF Downes Papers, Australian Defence Force Academy Library, Canberra; see also evidence of French and Penton to the RCWSA—Evidence, vol 1, 341-47, 359-61. For the government's appreciation of their services see Gov-Gen C of A to SS Cols, 23 November 1901, Australia (General) No 45921, CO 418/10 (French), Gov Vic to SS Cols, 15 November 1899, Vic No 36281, CO 309/148 (Hollid Smith); Gov Qld to SS Cols, 6 January 1900, Qld No 5592, CO 234/70 (Gunter); Gov-Gen C of A, 22 October 1899, Australia (General) No 40450, CO 418/10 (Chippindall), PRO/AJCP.
100. See, for example, French's farewell speech to the Bushmen Contingent in February 1900: *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 March 1900, 7; Field, *The Forgotten War*, 135; also Hutton to Wolseley, 2 November 1899, HP, vol 9, Add Mss 50086, 136-44.
101. French to PUS Chief Secretary NSW, 26 October 1899, AWM1, item 14/1, AWM; French to Chief Secretary NSW, 26 February 1900, 5/6536, 1900/5094; and French to PUS Chief Secretary NSW, 2 April 1900, 5/6541, 1900/7797, Archives Office of New South Wales, Sydney.
102. Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, 156-61.
103. Hutton to Eleanor Hutton, 2 April 1900, HP, vol 14, Add Mss 50091, 23-24.
104. Hutton to Eleanor Hutton, Bloemfontein, 7 April 1899, HP, vol 14, Add Mss 50091, 25-26.
105. Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, 48.