



Royal United Services Institution. Journal

Publication details, including instructions for
authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rusi19>

"A Pair of Proposals for the Two British Armies"

Captain H. M. Johnstone R.E., ret.

Published online: 11 Sep 2009.

To cite this article: Captain H. M. Johnstone R.E., ret. (1908) "A Pair of Proposals
for the Two British Armies", Royal United Services Institution. Journal, 52:368,
1426-1429, DOI: [10.1080/03071840809418931](https://doi.org/10.1080/03071840809418931)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03071840809418931>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the
information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform.
However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no
representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness,
or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views
expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and
are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the
Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with
primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any
losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages,
and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or
indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the
Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes.
Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan,

sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

to be greater than if thirty riflemen were firing. **United States.** The longer the range the greater the advantage of the machine guns, up to extreme range. (b) The loss awarded must be reduced if the gun is not well handled, in accordance with the principles above explained. (c) At extreme ranges, beyond 1,200 yards, up to 2,500 yards, the gun is more effective, as compared with riflemen than at short ranges—worth twice as many riflemen. (d) The sudden and unexpected fire of a machine gun is very much more destructive and demoralising than the same fire when expected by the enemy; the effect is still more increased. Allowance will therefore be made for greater losses inflicted by machine guns in such cases. (e) The fire of machine guns against a partially concealed line of skirmishers is not very effective. Little loss will be awarded; but it is otherwise if the fire is held until the skirmishers expose themselves. In that case great loss must be awarded. (f) Machine guns trying to advance below 800 yards in pack under infantry fire must be ruled to suffer heavy losses. (g) One minute may be assumed as a fair allowance from pack to aimed fire by a machine gun. This is often important in determining whether the gun was able to fire upon an indicated objective or not. (h) Under fire from field artillery, beyond its own effective range, a machine gun must either advance under cover, intrench, or withdraw. If it does neither it must be ruled out. (i) Against artillery within effective machine gun range, machine guns have the advantage, piece for piece, except in the case of a frontal attack with the artillery "in battery." (j) Against infantry, the ruling must be based on the circumstances, remembering that infantry in mass is at the mercy of a machine gun, while the machine gun itself is best assailed by snipers, against which it must be protected by a few sharpshooters operating in the same manner. (k) The supply of ammunition available for the machine guns and the number of rounds fired must always be taken into account. (l) Against cavalry within machine gun range, the machine guns being formed for action, cavalry must always be ruled out of action. If the cavalry charge takes the machine guns by surprise in pack and approaches to within 300 yards in formation for charge, the machine guns must be ruled out of action.

CORRESPONDENCE.

"A PAIR OF PROPOSALS FOR THE TWO BRITISH ARMIES."

To the Editor of the JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL UNITED SERVICE INSTITUTION.

SIR,—If a nation usually gets the kind of Government it deserves, it is equally true that it usually gets the kind of Army it deserves. Here we are in the middle of a short year that is pregnant of the fate of the voluntary system, and already the great majority of the people seem to have lost all interest in the military problem. Owing to our vast tropical and over-sea possessions, our problem is the most intricate of all national military problems; even if we had a system of compulsion, our problem would still remain the most difficult of all.

The 300,000 Territorials, for whom Mr. Haldane called, are still one-third in default; 300,000 was laid down as the minimum for safety. Many people gravely doubt whether there will be anything like 200,000 after the 1st of April, 1909.

To some extent, it is true, a lack of numbers can be made up for by high quality, as we found in South Africa; but can our Territorials, with their less-than-Militia training, be reckoned of high quality? In spirit they can, but not in tactical quality. Every infantry company of them, every squadron, every battery of artillery, would be worth 50 per cent. more in war, if it had a substantial addition to its ranks of veteran, highly-trained soldiers. Ask any commander of a Territorial battalion what would be the increased value of his unit if every company had in it twenty-five fully-trained soldiers and two or three non-commissioned officers.

One of the objects of this paper is to show that this welcome addition can be got without trouble, and with very little expense.

The British soldier enlists for 7 years with the colours and 5 in the reserve. He is then only from 30 to 33 years of age, and is still eminently fit for the field; but the War Office lets him go and loses him. In Continental armies the soldier is kept under obligation to serve until a much later age and a sprinkling of these veterans among the young troops will be of very great advantage in war time.

The proposal is that the Regular shall enlist for 7 years with the colours, 5 years in the Reserve, and 5 years in the Territorial Army; that he shall not only be liable to be called out with the latter for war, but shall, during his 5 years, be a complete Territorial in the matter of the annual camp and the musketry course. If he serves as a non-commissioned officer he shall also attend the drills, and shall be paid for that work.

It is hardly to be supposed that this extra obligation of 5 years' Territorial service would seriously affect recruiting. Few recruits consider seriously what is going to happen 12 years after their enlistment, and a considerable inducement could be held out to them of the following kind. If, during a man's 5 years in the Territorials, a great war occurred, necessitating the embodiment of the Territorials for active service, then the old soldier would become eligible for pension to the end of his days—a military pension, that would in no way preclude his obtaining the civil Old-Age Pension when he arrived at the age for it.

Let us now see what number of these Regular-Territorials can be counted upon. The number of men transferred annually from the colours to the Reserve is (I speak from memory) about 23,000. We shall be on the safe side in taking 20,000 as the number discharged five years later from the Reserve into civil life. Out of these, exemptions on various accounts would have to be made; it would hardly, for instance, be fair to prevent a man from emigrating to a British possession where he had work waiting for him. The question of health, too, might weed out a certain percentage. Let us take 15,000 as the annual number who would join the Territorials. Serving thus for 5 years, there would be 75,000 veteran, highly-trained soldiers eventually belonging to the Territorial Army. This is exactly one-quarter of the proposed strength of the Territorials; every company of infantry could have 25 non-commissioned officers and men of this high quality in its ranks. Owing to the paucity

of Regular cavalry as compared with the Yeomanry, nothing like the same proportion would be here available from the Regulars for the Territorials. Nor would the Territorial Field Artillery obtain so large a proportion as 25 per cent. of its *personnel*, if it be decided to adhere to the enormous number of 15-pounder batteries, which the scheme lays down for the Territorial Army. The total *personnel* of a field battery at war strength is 173 in rank and file. There would be sufficient Regular field gunners passing annually from the Army Reserve to provide a reinforcement of 10 per cent. to each Territorial battery. Each gun could get one good layer and one leading gun-driver, with some five or six skilled gunners over for the battery in general.

It must be remembered that these men—infantry, cavalry, artillery, engineers—would not suddenly appear in the units at war time. The plan is that they belong to the Territorials all the time of their five years' liability. They would not do the ordinary drills of the Territorials—that would be an absurd tax to impose upon them—but they would join their units for camps and manœuvres, and also shoot with them. They would thus become acquainted with their Territorial comrades and with their new officers, and would be of the greatest help to the latter in camps.

The above proposal, thus roughly sketched in outline, seems to the writer to be free from the danger of becoming a shuttlecock of party politics. The same cannot unfortunately be said of the proposal which follows, for whenever it is mooted in the presence of any politicians, one always hears the fear expressed that it would be resisted tooth and nail by the ——— Party. To the writer the cause of such opposition has always been a mystery; but there is such a thing as "cussedness."

The proposal is simply that every man, on passing through the Regular Army and being transferred with a good character to the Reserve, should be *entitled* to a civil appointment under Government; that the man in fact should, as a matter of course, serve first as a soldier and then as a civilian.

I do not intend on this occasion to exhibit the figures that show that there is, in the control of the Government, a number of appointments sufficient to provide for an arrangement of this kind. Careful study of a number of Blue Books, reporting the researches and conclusions of several committees and commissions that have during 20 years past considered the question of the employment of discharged soldiers, show not only that the latter can be provided for in the way proposed, but that those Government Departments who have been employing old soldiers report most favourably on them in their civil capacities.

A pecuniary argument in favour of the proposal is that this is not a case of creating posts and drawing on the public purse to pay their holders; all of these posts must exist, and the reservist's or discharged soldier's pay or pension can be wholly or partially saved.

An objection that is heard is as follows: that if a public service, such as that of the postmen, was entirely or very largely manned by old soldiers, a frightful dislocation would occur on the outbreak of a war that required complete mobilisation; that, if the Metropolitan Police, for instance, was so manned, there would be immediate chaos in London on the day of mobilisation. This fear is the result of incomplete thinking. These civil servants usually remain in their service till the age of 55;

many, such as doorkeepers, messengers, caretakers, to a greater age. The soldier, enlisting at 19, would enter his civil appointment at 26; from 26 to 31 years of age he would be an Army Reservist; from 31 to 55, he would remain in his civil appointment even in time of war. (This ignores for the present the 5 years' Regular-Territorial proposal with which this paper commenced.)

For 5 years out of 29 (55 minus 26) he would be liable to be taken from his civil employment; and we may, therefore, conclude that one-fifth only of the civil servants would be snatched away for war—one-sixth on the bare figures, but allowance is made for death and disability.

If the Regular-Territorial proposal were in force, the proportion would naturally be much higher, say, 2 civil servants out of every 5. Compromises would have to be made in particular parts of particular departments, some men (who, it must be remembered, are fully trained soldiers already) being held back in their civil posts until the Territorial Army urgently needed them.

Our voluntary system is very expensive, Government having to compete for recruits in the open market of labour. Under this system the army must remain comparatively small; it is all the more important, therefore, that it should be of the best quality. Before the end of their 7 years' colour service our men are quite a match for any foreign troops; in the opinion of the writer a British battalion or battery, with a large proportion of 5, 6, and 7 years' men in its ranks, is far superior to an average foreign unit. But it is undeniable that the raw material we get is much below the average of the manhood of the country in physique, intelligence, and education.

Under a system in which a man served first as a soldier and then as a civilian, the youth would see before him an assured future. At once, on the inception of the system, the recruiting offices would be besieged by applicants far in excess of the number required, and by applicants from a class of the population excelling the present applicants in physique, intelligence, and character. The Army could begin to pick and choose, and would fill its ranks with first-rate material, and the Civil Service would certainly be as well off as it is at present. Why should not the Army have the right to claim the best manhood of the nation?

With the present establishment of strength the Army might be cheaper than before, for the daily pay of the soldier might be reduced as a set-off to the security of his future. His pay, also, as a Reservist, would be saved.

To sum up:—The Regular-Territorial proposal would, if adopted, greatly improve the quality and numbers of the Territorial Army, and it would be done at a very small expense; the Soldier-Civil Servant system would vastly improve the quality of the recruits for the Regular Army, would cost nothing at all, and might even result in a considerable annual saving to the public purse.

Captain H. M. JOHNSTONE, R.E., ret.

Somerfield Lodge, Haddington, N.B.,
20th August, 1908.