
EFFICIENCY OF THE ARMY.

MESSAGE

FROM THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

RECOMMENDING

LEGISLATION TO INCREASE THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ARMY.

JANUARY 9, 1905.—Read; referred to the Committee on Military Affairs and ordered to be printed.

To the Senate and House of Representatives:

I have, in a former message, stated to the Congress my belief that our Army need not be large, but that it should, in every part be brought to the highest point of efficiency. The Secretary of War has called to my attention the fact that the act approved February 2, 1901, which accomplished so much to promote this result, failed to meet the needs of one staff department in which all of our people are peculiarly interested, and of which they have a right to demand a high degree of excellence. I refer to the Medical Department. Not only does a competent medical service, by safe-guarding the health of the Army contribute greatly to its power, but it gives to the families of the nation a guaranty that their fathers, brothers, and sons who are wounded in battle or sicken in the camp shall have not only skilled medical aid, but also that prompt and well-ordered attention to all their wants which can come only by an adequate and trained personnel.

I am satisfied that the Medical Corps is much too small for the needs of the present Army and therefore very much too small for its successful expansion in time of war to meet the needs of an enlarged Army and in addition to furnish the volunteer service a certain number of officers trained in medical administration. A bill which, in the opinion of the Secretary of War, of the late Secretary of War, and of the General Staff of the Army, supplies these deficiencies was introduced at the last session of Congress and is now before you. I am also advised that it meets the cordial approval of the medical profession of the country. It provides an organization which, when compared with that of other nations, does not seem to err on the side of excessive liberality, but which is believed to be sufficient. I earnestly recommend its passage by the present Congress. If the Medical

Department is left as it is no amount of wisdom or efficiency in its administration would prevent a complete breakdown in the event of a serious war.

I transmit herewith a memorandum which has been prepared for me by the Surgeon-General of the Army, and also the remarks of the former and of the present Secretary of War with reference to this bill.

It is reported to me that the Ordnance Corps is in a position of disadvantage; that its personnel is inadequate to the performance of the duties with which it is charged, and that under existing conditions it is unable to recruit its numbers with officers of the class necessary for the conduct of its very technical work. It is unnecessary for me to lay stress upon the desirability of having the design and manufacture of the material with which we are to fight in competent and sufficient hands, as there is no difference of opinion as to the intention of all concerned to have provided a proper supply of weapons, munitions, engines of war, equal in conception and construction to any in the world and superior in any respects in which by skill and attention we may be able to compass such superiority.

The greatly increased utilization of the exact sciences in ordnance construction requires a larger personnel for their application, and the process of its selection should be severely and continuously discriminating under conditions offering stimulus sufficient to cause officers of proper capacity, of whom it appears there are plenty to wish to subject themselves to it. A bill embodying the necessary provisions and involving no radical departure from existing methods has been prepared by the War Department. I think it should be passed.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

WHITE HOUSE, *January 9, 1905.*

[Memorandum for the President—The bill to increase the efficiency of the Army.]

WAR DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE SURGEON-GENERAL,
Washington, December 7, 1904.

The fact that mortality from disease in armies in war time greatly exceeds that from losses in battle is well known. The noneffective rate from sickness is even more greatly in excess of that from wounds. The British army in the Peninsula, in spite of the many bloody battles, lost three times as many men from disease as from wounds. The infant French Republic was saved at Valmy more by the paralysis of Prussian efficiency by ravage of disease than by that rather bloodless victory. General Scott in the Mexican war lost by disease one-third of his effective strength. The loss from disease in the civil war was more than double that from the casualties of battle. The military efficiency of newly raised armies is specially liable to be gravely compromised or even destroyed from this cause.

The three primary duties of the Medical Department are:

1. To preserve the effective strength of armies (military sanitation).
2. To care for the sick and wounded.
3. To conduct the administrative work of the department.

To carry out these objects requires a highly specialized and complex organization and a numerous trained personnel. Military sanitation is now recognized to be a well-marked specialty in medicine of which

the average practitioner knows little more than he does of the methods of military medical administration. The second duty is that for which civilian physicians can be used to advantage, while the first and third must in the main be in the hands of trained medical officers in order to secure efficiency. The standard of what is regarded as a satisfactory degree of efficiency in all of these directions has been greatly raised in late years.

In the Spanish war the country was scandalized by a monthly death rate from disease which rose from 2.15 per thousand in July to 4.08 in August, but fell again to 2.45 in September. During the civil war a higher death rate from disease than the highest maximum above mentioned persisted for many months, reaching in the spring of 1862 a maximum more than double it, without creating half as much popular clamor.

Nor would such occurrences be possible now in civilized warfare as for 600 wounded to lie for more than ten days on the battlefield, as happened after the second battle of Bull Run, on August 30, 1862, when many of the wounded died of starvation. That this was not one of the unavoidable horrors of war, but was, as stated by the Surgeon-General in reporting these facts, due to defective medical organization is evidenced by the fact that after the organization of the ambulance service of Letterman such occurrences ceased in the Army of the Potomac. After the great battles of Fredericksburg, December 13, 1862, and Chancellorsville, May 2, 1863, for instance, although the army was defeated, the field was cleared of wounded without confusion or delay.

The public sentiment of the civilized world therefore demands better organization and higher efficiency for the medical department of armies than at any time heretofore. Other nations, including even so poor a nation as the Japanese, are willing to pay the cost of increased efficiency in the shape of a large and well organized medical service, and it is not to be believed that Congress or the American people will refuse for our Army what is demonstrated to be essential to avoid future failure and insure efficiency. For medical efficiency a certain number of trained medical officers is necessary to direct matters of military sanitation, and, in the words of Mr. Root, "to conduct the administration of the great and complicated medical service." The measure of this number is given by the Secretary of War in his report for this year as follows (p. 25):

It is evident that a staff department which has a personnel insufficient to perform the duties required of it in time of peace can not be successfully expanded to meet the increased responsibilities of war. The commissioned personnel of the Medical Department is nearly 200 short of the number required to perform its work at present, and the deficiency has to be made good by the employment of civilian physicians under contract. This is an expensive and unsatisfactory expedient in time of peace, while in time of war it heavily handicaps the efficiency of the Department.

This principle was not recognized in the reorganization of the Army in 1901. The increase in the Medical Department at that time was so inadequate that the proportion of medical officers to the army at large was not increased, but greatly diminished and was made considerably less than the proportion existing at the beginning of the Spanish war or the civil war—this in spite of the recommendation of the Dodge Commission that the regular corps be increased.

Instead of giving an advocate's discussion of the bill now before

Congress I prefer to refer the President to the impartial opinion of the experts of the Third Division of the General Staff as given in their report on it made to the Chief of Staff, which is to be found on pages 6, 7, and 8 of the report of the Senate Military Committee. (Report No. 2420.)

The attention of the President is especially asked to the following points:

The Army is to-day officered for a strength of 100,000 men except the Medical Department, which is only sufficient for 42,000.

An adequate increase in the Medical Corps was recommended by the Dodge Commission.

This bill offers, in the words of Secretary Taft, "a complete workable system."

With a less number than that asked for, the Medical Department can not perform the duties with which it is charged by Army Regulations in time of peace, or be successfully expanded to meet the increased labors and responsibilities of war.

With a less proportion in the higher grades it can not attract properly qualified candidates to fill the vacancies created.

The Reserve Corps constitutes an eligible list of competent civil physicians who will reinforce the regular Medical Corps in time of war or other emergency.

The increase of cost is, when the enlargement is completed four years hence, only a little over 4 per cent above the present cost of the Medical Corps, while next year it will be actually diminished under this act.

The increase of efficiency is as 320 is to 450, or about 40 per cent.

This bill has received the rigid scrutiny of the General Staff, and the approval of Secretary Root, of Secretary Taft, of the Military Committee of the Senate, and of the American Medical Association.

Respectfully submitted.

R. M. O'REILLY,
Surgeon-General.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, January 30, 1904.

I heartily approve this bill in principle. I consider that it will be greatly to the benefit of the service to abandon the employment of contract surgeons and substitute in their place regular commissioned officers. I do not think the number to which it is proposed to increase the Medical Corps is at all excessive. It seems to me that the presentation of the case by the Surgeon-General in regard to the necessities of skilled administration of the medical service in time of war is conclusive. It will be easy in time of war to secure an adequate number of physicians competent to treat the sick and wounded, but it will be impossible to secure medical men competent to conduct the administration of the great and complicated medical service unless they are specially trained in time of peace. The lack of a sufficient number of such trained officers in the past has caused untold suffering and the sacrifice of many thousands of valuable lives. It is our present duty to see to it that such a condition shall never exist again. I believe that that can be accomplished only by following the course which has now been indicated by the Surgeon-General and approved by the General Staff.

Upon the single question of the relative proportion of majors, lieutenant-colonels, and colonels which should properly be accorded to the Medical Corps, the Surgeon-General wishes to ask reconsideration by the General Staff. That single question, with the assent of the Chief of Staff, will accordingly be relegated to the General Staff for further consideration. Upon all other questions I approve the bill in detail.

ELIHU ROOT, *Secretary of War.*

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, February 18, 1904.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a bill to increase the efficiency of the Medical Department of the United States Army, together with the approval by my predecessor, Secretary Root, of the bill in every part except as to the relative proportions of majors, lieutenant-colonels and colonels which should properly be accorded to the Medical Corps.

The question was remitted to the General Staff for further consideration and has been returned with the recommendation that the number of colonels be limited to 12, the lieutenant-colonels to 18, with 110 majors and 300 captains and first lieutenants; whereas the recommendation of the Surgeon-General is that the colonels number 20, the lieutenant-colonels 20, majors 110 and captains and lieutenants 300.

It appears that the division of the General Staff to which the bill was referred approved the proportion of colonels and lieutenant-colonels as recommended by the Surgeon-General, but that the War Department General Staff as a body, when the exact point was submitted to them, made the recommendation as above. General Chaffee was not present, I am informed, at the meeting of the General Staff, and possibly did not have the advantage of all the statements which were made with reference to the proper number of medical officers for each tactical unit in the field. Certainly the evidence introduced by the Surgeon-General shows that the number necessary for each tactical unit is considerably greater than that which must have been assumed by General Chaffee in the conclusion which he reached. Of course, I must differ from the opinion of the General Staff and the distinguished chief of that body with great diffidence in view of the short time that I have been in the Department. I have, however, read the arguments carefully of the Surgeon-General and the statement of the third division of the General Staff and also of the Chief of Staff, and I am bound to say that it seems to me that the arguments of the Surgeon-General substantially outweigh those advanced by the Chief of Staff. The Surgeon-General's report shows a complete workable system which the amendment by the General Staff truncates and destroys the symmetry of. Then, too, the prospect of promotion which the increased number in the higher grades offers to those who enter the service seems to be absolutely essential to procuring good material for the Medical Corps. The increased expense in securing a proper medical education in modern days, as shown by lengthening of the term of preparation from two to four years, and the great professional rewards in civil life make it highly important that there be offered a due prospect of promotion to young men of ability to induce them to enter the Corps.

In deference to the opinion of the General Staff, however, I have concluded to recommend a reduction in the number of colonels and an increase in the number of lieutenant-colonels, so that the bill should provide for 16 colonels and 24 lieutenant-colonels, and this I do after a conference with the Surgeon-General, who is willing to accept the amendment.

I do not approve that amendment to the law which limits the examination of a lieutenant-colonel, necessary to his promotion to a colonelcy, to an examination of his physical condition, his moral character, and his past record in the service, and it seems to me that the examinations ought to be continued to the highest rank, except that of the Surgeon-General, which grade is filled, of course, only by selection. Such a requirement will have the effect of preventing the upper grades from being regarded as places of leisure and as not entailing the hard, enthusiastic work which is found in the lower ranks.

I have the honor to recommend the passage of the bill amended as suggested. I believe it to be of the utmost importance in securing a proper and efficient Medical Corps.

I accompany this letter with the bill and with the communications received by me from the Surgeon-General, the Third Division of the General Staff, and the Chief of Staff.

Very respectfully,

WM. H. TAFT,
Secretary of War.

The CHAIRMAN COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AFFAIRS,
House of Representatives.

[NOTE.—The bill as finally sent to Congress was altered so as to be in accord with the views of the Secretary of War as expressed above.]