The Cambridge Chronicle

E. RICHARDSON HOOPER.] "UNCOMPROMISING HOSTILITY TO THE RE-ELECTION OF MARTIN VAN BUREN." [Editor and Proprietor.

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Organization of the Militia.

Letter from the Secretary of War, transmitting a system of re-organization of the Militia of the United States.

WAR DEPARTMENT, March 20, 1840.

SIR:—In compliance of the resolution of the House of Representatives of the 9th instant, "that the Secretary of War be requested to communicate his plan, in detail, for the re-organization of the militia of the United States," I have the honor to submit the following report:

The impossibility of guarding our exposed frontiers by the small regular force of the United States, renders it necessary that some plan should be devised to make the militia available without burdening the country, either by too great an expense in maintaining it in the field, or by abstracting too large a number of useful citizens from the productive labors of agriculture, or of the mechanic arts.

The mass of the militia of the United States, as at present organized, does not fall short of one million five hundred thousand men; and every day that they are mustered for inspection or exercise, abstracts at least one million of dollars from the earnings of labor, without adding any thing whatever to the military efficiency of the country, and too often affecting injuriously the moral condition of those who are assembled for the purpose. Left by the little instructions they receive on such occasions, without discipline, subordination, or knowledge of the useful arts, and totally ignorant of the manner of taking care of themselves, or of each other in the field, such a militia, if called out in mass would rather prove a burden than an assistance to the army employed in defence of the country, as is shown by the experience of General Washington, repeatedly expressed in his correspondence, as well as by the result of more recent events during the last war. It is true that, in the principal cities of the United States there are to be found well organized, disciplined, and soldier-like companies, battallions, regiments, brigades and divisions of volunteers; men who individually and collectively would do good service in the field. But any one acquainted practically with war, knows that to fight bravely, and even to manoeuvre coolly and skillfully, on the field of battle, are not the most necessary qualifications of the soldier. They are, perhaps, the most common, and the least often called into action. Soldiers must be taught their duties in garrison and in the field, in marching, encamping, in the police and military administration of an army. This instruction so essential, and without which it is impossible to form the soldier, cannot be given in a day's training, by officers nearly as ignorant of these branches of the service as the soldiers themselves. I speak of the generality of the militia officers. It must be imparted by veteran and skillful officers, in garrison and in camp, and to men and officers alike; and it must be imparted to a few at a time. Any attempt to organize, discipline, and render every way fit for service in the field, the unwieldy mass of the militia, of this vast country, which will soon ascend to two millions of men, must fail, for want of means, and leave the country exposed to the terrible disasters which will attend the first burst of war upon its frontiers, if they are to be defended by armed but undisciplined multitudes.

It has been supposed that it will be sufficient to instruct the officers only, and that the privates can, under well instructed officers, be formed into soldiers instantly, by the magic voices of good commanders.—In the first place, it requires time to form a soldier, under the most practised, experienced, and skillful officers; and our soil might be polluted by the foot of the invader, our cities taken and sacked, and our forts occupied, before our armed citizens could be taught the elements of tactics, or the simple use of firelock. And, secondly, it will prove a fatal error to suppose that an officer can be formed by being drilled as a private. The habit of command, the prompt eye, the firm tone, the self possession in moments of difficulty and danger, which inspire men with confidence and courage, and are so essential to secure their ready obedience, are the result of practice. The officers and privates who are to act together in the field are practised, the one to the duties of obedience, and the other to those of command.

Satisfied that an efficient force cannot be created by drilling the officers alone, as well as of the impracticability of rendering the whole mass of the militia available, at the same time, for the defence of the country; and convinced, from the experience of our past wars, that it is necessary to organize and discipline a select body of citizen soldiers, who, in a moment of danger, will know their stations, and their duties when assembled there, and who, although separated from the mass for a short time, will return and impart to it the military knowledge and experience they have acquired during their period of service. I have prepared the plan, the details of which are herewith submitted, agreeably to the resolution of the House. It is believed that, on examining them, it will be apparent that the scheme is not liable to any one of the objections that are urged against large standing armies; but on the contrary, that it will form a select body of well disciplined militia, ready themselves to defend their country in the hour of danger, against any sudden attack, and furnishing a corps, around which the less-instructed mass may rally; possessing, in some degree, the military knowledge and skill of regular soldiers, they will be able alike to protect their country from a foreign foe, and to guard its liberties from any danger that may threaten them.—

It appears to me, that the organization now proposed, will prevent the necessity of maintaining large standing armies, even in time of war. The militia properly drilled and instructed, will be thereby rendered perfectly efficient, and capable of defending the forts along our maratime frontier, which in the absence of such an organization, would require a regular army of fifty thousand men. At present, the militia cannot be rendered immediately available against a surprise; whereas under the proposed organization, they would repair to their stations at the first alarm, and would be efficient soldiers when there. In case of war, those stations would become permanent, and arrangements might easily be made, so as render the service as little burdensome as possible to the artizan and mechanic.

Every precaution has been taken to avoid all interference with the rights of the States, or to lessen their means of defence. The militia will be called out in the manner at present provided for by law, and no change is contemplated in the modes of officering the several corps of which the active class will be composed.

It will not abstract a single man from the defence of the state where he resides, nor separate him from the class of citizens to which he belongs. It will, on the contrary, strengthen the defences of each State, by furnishing it with a well organized and well-disciplined force, taken from the People, and making part of the People, equally interested with their fellow-citizens in the preservation of free institutions and ready at all times to guard the territory and the liberty of their country. Neither does it interfere, in any manner, with the constitutional rights of the states to train their own militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress, because the active militia will be employed by the President during the period they are preparing for warlike service in garrison and in the field. And while the States have all the advantages which may result from a well organized and disciplined militia, they will, at the same time, be exempt from the losses, expenses, and evils which follow necessarily, from the assemblage of large multitudes for merely a nominal militia instruction. It is to be considered, also, that a portion of the militia are provided with opportunities for the attainment of the essentials of militia knowledge; and at the same time that they relieve the remainder from an onerous and useless burden, they themselves will not be oppressed by an undue amount of military services being required of them; but, on the contrary, by comparing the time which, under the present system, is devoted to that object, it will be found that there is but very little additional service, if any required, and for that time they will be sufficiently compensated. The compensation contemplated, is adequate, under a good administration of the laws proposed, which are to be made uniform in their application, by regulations to be issued by the President, so as to prevent any expense to the citizen who is thus called out, though it may not rise, in amount, to the sum which his pursuits in social life might afford. The total amount required to recompense the militia to be called out for exercise will be trifling, when compared with the loss of time experienced by our fellow citizens under the present imperfect organization, and of the serious evils to which the youth of the country are exposed by the frequent attempts now made to impart to them a very imperfect knowledge of the duties of the soldier. The subjoined plan will, it is believed, tend to diminish, if not entirely remove, such evils, and will also, by engendering an *esprit du corps* throughout the militia of the several districts, elevate in the mind of every citizen, the character of the duties which he is required to perform and thus make more certain the results which are hoped for by this system of military precaution and defence. In preparing the details of the proposed re-organization of the militia of the United States, I have been governed by an earnest desire to place the country in an attitude of defence, and at the same time, to secure it from the necessity of maintaining at any period a large standing army; to render the militia effective, without withdrawing too large a number of our fellow citizens from their occupations at any one time; and to diffuse throughout the community generally, some knowledge of militia service, without taxing the Treasury too heavily. All this, it appears to me, will be effected by drilling during four years, one hundred thousand men, for a period not exceeding thirty, nor less than ten days in each and every year, at such time as may least interfere with their ordinary occupations, and for an equal term, keeping that force so organized that it may as a reserve, ready to act in cases of emergency; doing, in the meanwhile, ordinary militia duty, such as is now required by law in the several States. The expenses of the system, which, if carried out, would place the United States in an impregnable state of defence, will not exceed $1,362,093 yearly, if the maximum number of days for drill be adopted by Congress, and, as it is believed that ten days in each and every year will prove sufficient, the annual expenses will be less than $500,000.

Details of the proposed system.

It should be provided—

1st, that each and every free able-bodied white citizen of the respective States, resident therein, who is or shall be of the age of twenty, or under that of forty-five years, (with the exceptions hereinafter stated) shall, severally and respectively, be enrolled in the militia, by the captain or commanding officer of the company, within whose bounds such citizen shall reside, and that it shall be the duty, at all times, of every such captain, or commanding officer of a company, to enroll every such citizen as aforesaid, and also those who shall from time to time arrive at the age of twenty years, or who, being of that age and under that of forty-five (with the exceptions hereinafter named,) shall come to reside within his bounds; and that he shall, without delay, notify such citizen of the said enrollment; by a proper non-commissioned officer of the company, by whom such notice may be proved; that every citizen, so enrolled, and shall within three months thereafter provide himself with a good musket, bore of capacity to receive a ball of eighteen in the pound; a sufficient bayonet and belt; two spare flints; knapsack; cartridge box to contain at least twenty four cartridges suited to the bore of the musket, and each cartridge to contain a ball and three buckshot, and a sufficient quantity of powder; or with a good rifle, knapsack, shot pouch and powder horn or flask, with sufficient powder for twenty four charges, and two spare flints; and that he shall appear so armed, accoutred, and provided when called out for exercise or into service; and every citizen so enrolled and providing himself with the arms, ammunition and accoutrements required as aforesaid, shall hold the same exempted from all suits, distresses, executions, or sales for the payment of taxes.

2d. That the Vice President of the U. States; the officers, judicial and executive, of the government of the United States; the members of both Houses of Congress and their respective officers with their clerks; all post officers and stage-drivers, who are employed in the care and conveyance of the mail of the post office of the United States, all ferrymen employed at any ferry on the post road, or inspectors of exports; all pilots, all mariners actually employed in the sea service of any citizen or merchant within the United States; and all persons who now are, or may hereafter be exempted by the laws of the respective States; shall be exempted from militia duty notwithstanding their being above the age of twenty and under that of forty-five.

3d. That the citizens thus enrolled shall constitute the first class, and be denominated the mass of the militia; and the said mass shall be divided into divisions brigades, regiments, and companies, and be organized as follows, to wit: a company (infantry or rifle) shall consist of one captain one first and one second lieutenant, four sergeants, four corporals, one drummer, one fifer, or bugler, and eighty privates. A company of dragoons shall consist of one captain, one first and second lieutenant, four sergeants, four corporals, one farrier, two buglers, and sixty privates.—A company of artillery shall consist of one captain two first and two second lieutenants, four sergeants four corporals, three artificers, one drummer and fifer or two buglers or trumpeters, and eighty privates.—A regiment shall consist of one colonel, one lieutenant colonel, one major, one adjutant, with the rank of first lieutenant, one quartermaster, with the rank of captain, one paymaster, one surgeon, one assistant surgeon, one sergeant major, one quartermaster sergeant, two principal musicians, and ten companies. A brigade shall consist of one brigadier general, with one aid-de-camp, having the rank of major and two regiments. A division shall consist of one major general, with two aids-de-camp, with the rank of major one division inspector, with the rank of lieutenant Colonel, one division quartermaster with the rank of major, one judge advocate, and four brigades.

4th. That from each regiment of the mass there shall be formed two companies to serve as light infantry or riflemen; and that to each division of the mass there shall be attached one company of artillery and one company of horse, formed of volunteers, at the discretion of the commander-in chief of the State, not exceeding one company from a brigade, and shall be clothed and equipped at their own expense, the color and fashion to be determined by the brigadier general commanding the brigade to which they belong. That the commissioned officers of the artillery and infantry shall be armed with a sword of such description as is denominated cut and thrust. That the commissioned officers of the cavalry shall furnish themselves with good horses of at least fourteen and a half hands high, and be armed with a sabre and a pair of pistols and holsters for the same. Each dragoon to furnish himself with a a serviceable horse at least fourteen and a half hands high, a good saddle, bridle, valise, breastplate, and crupper, a pair of boots and spurs, a pair of pistols, a sabre, cartridge box, to contain twelve cartridges for pistols.

5th. That each regiment shall be provided with the State regimental colors, and each company with a drum and fife, or bugles, as the Legislature of the respective States may direct.

6th. That the divisions, brigades, and regiments into which the mass is divided, shall be numbered at the period of their formation, and a record thereof made in the adjutant general's of the State; and when in the field, or in service in the State, that they shall respectively take rank according to their numbers, reckoning the lowest number highest in rank; and also, that the relative rank of differents corps shall be as follows: 1st cavalry, 2d. artillery, 3d. infantry, 4th riflemen, and that the said order shall be observed on all parades of ceremony and review, or on other duty, except when, in the opinion of the commanding officer, the good of the service may render another arrangement necessary; and further, that all commissioned officers shall take rank according to the date of their commissions and when two of the same grade bear an equal date, then their rank shall be determined by lot, to be drawn by them before the commanding officer of the brigade, regiment company, or detachment.

7th. That there shall be an adjutant general appointed in each State, with the rank of colonel, whose duty it shall be to distribute all orders from the commander in-chief of the State to the several corps; to attend all public reviews when the commander-in-chief of the State shall review the militia, or any part thereof; to obey all orders from him relative to carrying into execution and perfecting the system of discipline which may be established; to furnish blank forms of different returns that may be required, and to explain the principles on which they should be made; to receive from the several officers of the different corps throughout the State, returns of the militia under their commands, reporting the actual situation of their arms, accoutrements, and ammunition; their delinquencies, and every other thing which relates to the general advancement of good order and discipline: all of which the several commanding officers of the divisions, brigades, regiments, and companies should be required to make, in the upward order of gradation, in such form and at such times as the Legislature of the respective States may direct, so that the said adjutant general may be duly furnished therewith; and the said adjutant general, from the returns thus furnished, should annually make an abstract, or consolidated report, of the same, to the commander-in-chief of the State to which he belongs, with their arms, accoutrements, and ammunition, to the adjutant general of the militia of the United States, on or before the first Monday of January in each year. And it should be made the duty of the Secretary of War, from time to time to give such directions to the adjutant general of the militia as might in his opinion be necessary to produce uniformity in the said returns and he should lay an abstract of the same before Congress, before the first Monday of February annually.

8th. That it shall be the duty of the brigade meetings of the militia, composing the several brigades during the time of their being under arms, to inspect their arms, ammunition and accoutrements; to superintend their exercise and manoeuvres, and introduce the prescribed system of military discipline through out the brigade, and such orders as they shall from time to time receive from the commander-in chief of the State; to report to the adjutant general of the State, at least once in every year, the condition of the brigade to which he belongs; the situation of the arms, accoutrements and ammunition as they actually may be at the time of inspection, and every other thing which may in his judgment relate to the government, good order, and military discipline of the brigade.

9th. That in addition to the officers referred to, there shall be also one quarter master general, with the rank of brigadier general, to the militia of each State.

10th. That within ——— months after the adoption and establishment of this system, there shall be taken from the mass of the militia, in each State, Territory, and District of the United States, by draft, or by voluntary service, such number between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-seven years, so that the whole may not exceed 100,000 men, and in the following proportions for each State, Territory and District respectively, to wit:—Maine 4,400 men, N. Hampshire 2,400 Vermont 2,400, Massachusetts 6,000, Connecticut 2,800, Rhode Island 800, New York 18,000, New Jersey 2,800, Pennsylvania 18,400, Delaware 800, Maryland 3,200, Virginia 6,000, District of Columbia 400, North Carolina 4,400, South Carolina 2,400, Georgia 2,800, Florida 400, Alabama 2,000, Mississippi 800, Louisiana 1,600, Tennessee 4,400, Arkansas 400, Missouri 1,200, Iowa 400, Kentucky 4,400, Illinois 1,200, Indiana 2,800, Ohio 8,000, Michigan 800, and Wisconsin 400 men.—This force to constitute the second class, and be denominated the active or moveable Force.

11th. That the active or moveable force shall be divided into companies and be organized as follows: A company shall consist of one captain, one first and second lieutenant, four sergeants, four corporals, one drummer and one fifer and ninety privates. A batallion shall consist of one major, an adjutant with the rank of first lieutenant, one sergeant major, one quarter master sergeant, and four companies. And that the said active or moveable force shall be held to serve as such, and be governed by such rules as may be prescribed, for the period of four years—one fourth of the same in each State, Territory and District, going out annually; the order of succession to be determined in the first instance by lot.

12th. That there shall be a third class of the militia of the U. States, to be denominated the reserve or sedentary force, which shall be organized in the same manner as the active force. And that the reserve force so organized, shall be composed of all those who shall have served the legal time indicated for the second class, and be held to serve for four years in the same; at the expiration of which time they shall return to the mass, and be subject to no further military or militia duty, unless in case of invasion, or a levee en masse. And such portions of the active force as may go out of the same annually, shall forthwith be considered as belonging to the reserve or sedentary force: and after the termination of the first 4 years service of any portion of the reserve, one fourth of that body shall go out of active service annually, in the same manner as prescribed for the second class.

13th. That the deficit occasioned by the transfer annually of one-fourth of the active to the reserve force, and by the discharge annually of one-fourth of the reserve, be yearly supplied by a draught, or by voluntary service, from the mass.

14th. That for the greater convenience and instruction and discipline of the active and sedentary force, the territory of the United States shall be divided into ten districts, which until otherwise directed by law, shall be composed as follows:

1st. District—Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont,	9,200 men
2d District—Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut,	9,600 men
3d District—New York,	18,000 men
4th District—New Jersey & Pennsylvania,	13,200 men
5th District—Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, and Virginia,	10,400 men
6th District—N. Carolina, S. Carolina, Georgia and Florida,	10,000 men
7th District—Alabama, Mississippi, Lauisiana and Tennessee,	8,000 men
8th District—Arkansas, Missouri and Iowa,	2,000 men
9th District—Kentucky, Illinois and Indiana,	7,400 men
10th District—Ohio, Michigan, and Wisconsin,	9,200 men
Total,	97,800 men

15th That the batallions of the active and sedentary force shall be numbered at their formation, and a record made of the same; and that they shall take precedence according to the rank of the several majors commanding the same. And further, that when the battalion of two or more districts of the active and sedentary forces do duty together, they shall take rank according to the number of their respective districts, considering the lowest number highest in rank. And further that the order of precedence between the army of the United States and militia thereof, and between several classes of the militia with one another shall be as follows: 1st. Troops of the United States. 2d. Militia of the United States, in this order, to wit: 1st the active force. 2d. The sedentary force. 3d. The mass.

16th. That the officers of the militia of the several classes shall be appointed by and in such manner as the Legislatures of the respective States shall direct, and in the Territories of the United States, in such manner as is prescribed by existing laws.

17th. That the President of the United States be authorized to call and assemble such numbers of the active force of the militia, at such places within their respective districts, and at such times, not exceeding twice; nor ——days in the same year as he may deem necessary and during such period, including the time when going to and returning from the place of rendezvous, they shall be deemed in the service of the United States, and be subject to such regulations as the President may think proper to adopt for their instruction, discipline and improvement in military knowledge.

18th. That whenever the U. States shall be invaded, or be in imminent danger of invasion from any foreign nation, or Indian tribe, it shall be lawful for the President of the United States to call forth such number of the militia of the State or States most convenient to the place of danger or scene of action, and in the order provided for in the 16th head, as he may judge necessary, to repel such invasion, and to issue his orders to the proper officer. And in case of an insurrection in any state against the Government thereof that it shall be lawful for the President of the United States, on application of the Legislature of such State or of the Executive (when the Legislature cannot be convened) to call forth such number of militia of any other State or States, as may be applied for as he may judge sufficient to suppress such insurrection.

19. That whenever the laws of the U. States shall be opposed, or the execution thereof obstructed, in any State, by combinations too powerful to be suppressed by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings, or by the powers vested in the marshals, it shall be lawful for the President of the United States to call forth the militia of such State, or of any other State or States, as may be necessary to suppress such combinations, and to cause the laws to be duly executed; and the use of the militia so to be called for, may be continued if necessary, until the expiration of 30 days after the commencement of the next session of Congress; provided that, whenever it may be necessary, in the judgment of the President to use the military force thus called forth, he shall forthwith, by proclamation, command such insurgents to disperse, and retire peaceably to their respective abodes within a limited time; and provided, also, that the militia which the President is thus authorized to call forth, be of the active or of the active sedentary forces, when such force or forces of the State, or of the neighboring State; shall be, in his opinion, sufficient; and when not, then such portions of the mass as he shall deem necessary.

20th. The militia of the United States or any portion thereof, when employed in the service of the U. States, shall be subject to the same rules and articles of war as the troops of the U. States. And that no officer, non-commissioned officer, musician or private of the militia shall be compelled to serve more than six months after his arrival at the place of rendevouz, in any one year, nor more than in due rotation with every other able bodied man of the same rank in the regiment to which he belongs.

21st. That every citizen duly enrolled in the militia, shall be constantly provided with arms and accoutrements, and amunition, as already pointed out from and after the period when he shall have been duly notified of his enrolment; and any notice of warning to the citizens so enrolled, to attend a company, or regimental muster, or training, shall be deemed a legal notice of his enrolment.

22d. That officers, non commissioned officers, musicians, artificers and privates of volunteers and militia, when called into the service of the U. States, in the manner and under the circumstances refered to, shall be entitled to and receive the same monthly pay, rations, clothing, or money in lieu thereof, and forage, and be furnished with the same camp equipage as are or may be provided by law for the officers, musicians, and privates of the infantry of the United States, provided nevertheless, that such portions of the militia as may be called out, as provided under the 17th head, shall not be entitled to receive clothing or money in lieu thereof, nor shall any officer of the same be entitled to forage or money instead, for more than one horse nor for more than one servant each.

23d. That the officers of all mounted companies, volunteers, or militia, when in the service of the United States, shall each be entitled to receive forage, or money in lieu thereof, for two horses when they actually keep private servants,

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