

MAKING AN ARMY: BEGINNINGS

The Governor General was delighted. Writing to the Colonial Office in July 1908, Earl Grey spoke of the great spectacle that had been the Quebec Tercentary, the national celebration of the 300th anniversary of Champlain's arrival in Canada. What impressed him most was, of all things, the Militia: 'the smartness, smoothness and precision of the movements of the Canadian militia and the excellence of their horses were a source of great satisfaction to His Royal Highness, a surprise to Lord Roberts, and a revelation to all.'¹ If only it had been so.



The constitution of the new Dominion of Canada, the British North America Act, gave the federal government control over all aspects of defence. The Militia Act, passed in May 1868, laid down the outlines of a defence scheme. The Sedentary Militia now became a Reserve Militia in which all fit males between eighteen and sixty years of age had an obligation to serve. The Reserve was enumerated once in 1869 – and thereafter ignored. The only force in being was the existing Volunteer Militia, which could have a maximum of 40,000 men receive sixteen days' paid training each year. Those volunteers in service at the time of Confederation had to re-enrol if they wished to continue in uniform. The government divided the country into nine Military Districts – four in Ontario, three in Quebec, and one each in New Brunswick and Nova