

REPAIRS AND REFITTING, EAST COAST.

The problem of the present unsatisfactory state of affairs so far as repairs of H.M.C. Ships is concerned, is so urgent and of such vital importance that time does not permit of a full investigation of all the factors contributing to it. It is considered essential that the broad lines on which improvement is to be effected must be established immediately and that steps be taken at once to effect a radical change in the existing conditions.

2. The four main reasons for the present state of inefficiency are:-

- (i) Shortage of Labour.
- (ii) Interference with normal refitting schedules to meet operational requirements.
- (iii) Completion of newly constructed ships at Halifax Dockyard instead of at the Builders' yard.
- (iv) Lack of proper co-ordination of the existing facilities.

3. The following is the present state of affairs with regard to the four main causes above:-

(i) Shortage of Labour

The shortage of civilian dockyard labour has been a constant problem since the outbreak of war. To all intents and purposes the supply has now dried up. Although enrollment of civilian personnel amounts on an average to 100 per month, there is a corresponding discharge rate of about 70 per month. About a year ago the employment of large numbers of Naval personnel in dockyard work was approved, but this has not yet met the labour requirements. Large increases in civilian and Naval labour have recently been requested and steps are being taken to supply the Naval labour as rapidly as possible.

Skilled workmen are not, however, available in the numbers required and therefore recruits must be given long training in civilian establishments before they are considered fit for draft to the Coast. They are mostly young men with very little experience and further training in dockyard work is required at the Bases before they can be considered to be efficient Dockyard workers. It will be a long time before the full labour demands of the Dockyards can be met and it is essential that every possible step should be taken to organize the existing labour so as to obtain maximum efficiency from them.

(ii) Interference with normal refitting schedules to meet operational requirements.

In the past, in order to meet operational needs, refits of many ships have been delayed with a consequent great increase in the minor repairs which have to be effected on every occasion on which ships come into the harbour. The normal refit period established for Corvettes is six weeks. This schedule is rarely maintained and the time taken for refits is, it is believed, on an average 10 weeks. This is most serious and is in part due, at least, to the fact that ships are not taken in hand for refit on their due dates. In consequence it now takes as long to refit 2 ships as it should take to refit 3. Many Corvettes have completed two or more years service and it is therefore reasonable to suppose that increasing numbers of them will require major hull repairs and long refits which, in many cases, are overdue.

The responsibility for this situation rests, theoretically, with the Commander-in-Chief, who is charged with the responsibility for making arrangements for the periodic checking and refit of H.M.C. Ships to ensure preservation of the hulls and maintain the fighting efficiency of the Fleet, in accordance with Chapter XXVIII of K.R. and A.I.

Nevertheless, Naval Service Headquarters cannot unload the whole of this responsibility for the present state of affairs onto the Commander-in-Chief. Naval Service Headquarters has in the past either tacitly, or by definite instruction, approved of the delays in refit.

It is considered to be of the utmost importance that this situation should be corrected as rapidly as possible, and in the last analysis this can only be done by clear direction from Naval Service Headquarters. It is preferable for Escort groups to go to sea short of the desired number than that delay in refits should be carried to its inevitable conclusion, which is, that the available Escort Forces will be drastically reduced by break downs.

- (iii) Completion of newly constructed ships at Halifax Dockyard instead of at the Builders' Yard.

In the past, new construction ships have been sent to Halifax with long lists of items still to be completed. It is considered that every effort should be made to eliminate the necessity for any Dockyard work on new construction ships on their arrival at Naval Base Ports.

If it is inevitable that such completion work should be carried out at the Dockyard, it is recommended that Article 14, Chapter 1. of C.B. 4009, "Dockyard War Instructions" should be brought to the attention of all authorities concerned with repairs. This order reads as follows:- "Order of Completion of Ships. - Subject to any Admiralty (i.e. N.S.H.Q.) instructions that may be issued, the Superintendent will determine, after conference with the Principal Officers of the Dockyard, the order in which ships in hand by the Dockyard shall be completed, and will authorize the withdrawal of men from New Construction as may be necessary to meet requirements."

In other words, repairs should be given precedence over completion of new ships.

- (iv) Lack of proper co-ordination of the existing facilities.

It is considered that refits and repairs have been delayed in the past partly on account of the lack of proper co-ordination of the various activities of Naval repair bases and, in some cases, by lack of co-operation between the various departments. This appears to be the most fruitful angle from which this major problem can be attacked.

The ultimate solution of it would appear to be the appointment of a Director of Dockyards at N.S.H.Q. who would be responsible for the co-ordination of all repair facilities, and the control of the activities at the repair bases. The organization of such a department at Naval Service Headquarters at this juncture cannot, however, be contemplated. There is no hope that such a Directorate could begin to function efficiently for at least six months from the date of its inception, whereas the problem which has to be dealt with is vital, immediate, and of the greatest urgency. Failure to grapple with it at once is inexcusable in view of the first importance of the Battle of the Atlantic.

It is considered that it requires the whole time attention of an Executive Officer of sufficient authority to ensure that the utmost efforts are made to improve the present situation.

The attached recommendations are submitted for consideration:-

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Article 5 of Chapter 1 of C.M.R.'s be cancelled by approval of Council. This Article limits the responsibility of the Commander-in-Chief Canadian North West Atlantic, and reads as follows:-

" Powers of Commander-in-Chief or Flag Officer.- Where in the Naval Discipline Act or in K.R. and A.I. in so far as the same are applicable to the Naval Service, any power or duty is vested in or imposed upon a Flag Officer, or upon a Commander-in-Chief of a Station, such power or duty, shall in Canada, or in the Naval Service, be vested in, exercised or performed by the Chief of the Naval Staff."

2. That the title and position of Naval Officer-in-Charge, Halifax be abolished.
3. That the Commander-in-Chief Canadian North West Atlantic assume the duties of Naval Officer-in-Charge Halifax as modified by the recommendations hereunder.
4. That a "King's Harbour Master and Master Attendant" be appointed to the staff of the Commander-in-Chief Canadian North West Atlantic who will operate under the directions of the Chief of Staff. This Officer will be responsible for:-
 - (a) King's Harbour Master's duties.
 - (b) Movements of ships within the Port.
 - (c) Moorings and trots throughout the Port.
 - (d) Allocation of berths and the berthing of ships, except that the allocation of repair berths in the Dockyard will be under the control of the Admiral Superintendent, whose appointment is proposed hereunder.
 - (e) The swinging of ships for the adjustment of compasses.
 - (f) Harbour craft.
5. That the Commanding Officer "STADACONA" report directly to the Commander-in-Chief. The R.C.W. Depot will continue to report directly to Naval Service Headquarters on all matters concerning advancement, drafting and manning.
6. That the Commanding Officer "STADACONA" assume the following responsibilities in addition to those which he now holds as Captain of the Barracks.
 - (a) The discipline, policing and security of the Port throughout. He should confer with the Admiral Superintendent with regard to those matters in respect to such parts of the Dockyard as are under the immediate direction of the Admiral Superintendent.
 - (b) Passive air defence, fire prevention and fire fighting in the Port. He should confer with the Admiral Superintendent on these matters in such parts of the Dockyard as are under the direction of the Admiral Superintendent.
7. That an Officer of Flag rank should be appointed as "Admiral Superintendent East Coast Repairs", with headquarters at Halifax. It is proposed that this Officer should have command of all repair facilities on the East Coast of Canada, and that he should be given charge of such personnel, work shops and Dockyard facilities as are essential to the carrying out of his principal duties. He will coordinate the repairs on the East Coast, for which purpose it is considered that he should be free from all other duties than are essential to the carrying out of this main purpose. The relationship between the Admiral Superintendent East Coast Repairs and the Commander-in-Chief Canadian North West Atlantic will be substantially in accordance with Chapter 1, paras. 1 and 2 of O.U. 5225 "Home Dockyard Regulations", which read as follows:-

" Authority of Commanders-in-Chief over Naval Civil Establishments.- Under the King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions for the government of His Majesty's Naval Service, the Commander-in-Chief,

or Senior Officer, has authority and control over all Naval Civil Establishments within the limits of his command, so far as Fleet requirements are concerned, and the Superintendents will act as his representatives. The Commander-in-Chief, or Senior Officer, is, however, not to interfere with the management of those Establishments where there are Superintendents, unless a particular and sufficient cause should in his opinion render it necessary, in which event he is to report to the Admiralty the nature of the order given, and his reasons for interfering.

" Superintendent to Obey Commander-in-Chief.- If, however, the Superintendent considers that any public inconvenience is likely to arise from compliance with the Commander-in-Chief's order, he is to represent it to him, stating the objections, after which, if the order is persisted in, it is to be obeyed without further delay or discussion, the Commander-in-Chief becoming wholly responsible to the Admiralty for the measure; but the Superintendent may, if he thinks proper, send to the Admiralty any observations which he may be desirous to submit for consideration."

It is proposed that the Admiral Superintendent East Coast Repairs shall report direct to Naval Service Headquarters in all matters affecting repairs and refits, and repair facilities on the East Coast. The following Officers and departments will report direct to the Admiral Superintendent and in accordance with the foregoing the Admiral Superintendent will report directly to N.S.H.Q. in matters concerning them:-

The Dockyard and repair facilities, including the following -

- (a) The Constructive Department
- (b) The Marine Engineering Department
- (c) The Electrical Engineering Department
- (d) Technical Repairs
- (e) The Works Department
- (f) Boatswain of the Yard
- (g) The Naval Stores Department
- (h) The Central Victualling Depot
- (i) D.E.M.S. and A.N.D.
- (j) The Armament Depot
- (k) The Chart Depot
- (l) The Dockyard Records
- (m) The Co-ordinator of Civil Personnel
- (n) The Treasury Office

8. That the Admiral Superintendent East Coast Repairs be responsible at all East Coast Ports for the following duties which are the particular charge of the Officer in Charge of works:

Proposals to Naval Service Headquarters for the improvement or additions to all buildings and facilities on the East Coast and the maintenance and care of all Naval property at the bases, regardless of its location or use, including the following:

1. Barracks
2. Work shops
3. Offices
4. Store houses
5. Magazines
6. Wharves and piers
7. Docks and slipways
8. Oil fuel installations
9. Roads and sewers
10. Electric and water services
11. Recreation grounds and canteen

9. That all personnel under the direction of the Admiral Superintendent shall be under the administrative and disciplinary control of the Commanding Officer of the Barracks, or the local Naval Officer-in-Charge.

10. While it is not possible to plan Dockyard repair work with the precision possible in peace time, yet it is believed that much improvement can be achieved in the conduct of the business of the repair bases if regular conferences of all heads of departments are held by the Admiral Superintendent, or his representatives, both at Halifax and at outlying ports. It is therefore recommended that such conferences be held on every occasion on which ships are taken in hand for refit, and a definite time schedule be established for the refit, such schedule to be reported to Naval Service Headquarters.

At the conference the part to be taken by the ship's Officers and the ship's company in the carrying out of the refit is to be clearly established, and all defects which can reasonably be undertaken by ship's staff are to be so allotted, the work to be subject to Dockyard inspection. The Commanding Officer of the ship under refit must be made to understand clearly that he has a definite responsibility in this regard. He is to be instructed to use his ship's company to the best advantage in order that time taken for refit shall be reduced to a minimum.

On completion of refit ships are to be formally inspected by the Admiral Superintendent and heads of the Dockyard departments, or their representatives, in company with the Commanding Officers, who is to satisfy himself that the ship is in all respects complete as regards her seagoing and fighting efficiency.

Failure to live up to the dates of completion established at the conferences is to be reported to Naval Service Headquarters and the Commander-in-Chief Canadian North West Atlantic setting out the reasons for delay.

11. That at Gaspé, Sydney and Shelburne the Admiral Superintendent East Coast Repairs assume the responsibility with regard to personnel and repair facilities which he assumes in accordance with the foregoing at Halifax and to the same extent.
12. That Commander Superintendents be appointed at the following repair bases -

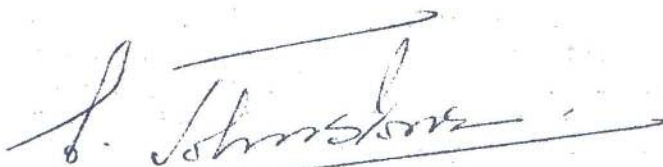
Gaspé, Sydney, Shelburne;

These Officers will carry out the same duties and exercise the same authority at their respective bases as the Admiral Superintendent East Coast Repairs exercises at Halifax. In all matters where the Admiral Superintendent is required to report directly to N.S.H.Q. the Commanders Superintendent will report to the Admiral Superintendent at Halifax. The relationship of Commanders Superintendent to the Naval Officers-in-Charge will be substantially that of the Admiral Superintendent to the Commander-in-Chief.

13. That a Deputy Superintendent East Coast Repairs be appointed to the staff of the Admiral Superintendent East Coast Repairs. This should be an Engineer Officer of Captain's rank.
14. That the Superintendent Naval Engineering Maritimes shall report to the Admiral Superintendent East Coast Repairs instead of, as heretofore, to Commander-in-Chief Canadian North West Atlantic. It will be necessary to modify his terms of reference.
15. That the title "Staff Officer Maintenance" recently introduced should be changed to "Works Officer" and that such Officers report to the Admiral Superintendent East Coast Repairs, directly at Halifax, and through the Commanders Superintendent of the outlying ports, where these Officers are appointed.
16. That immediate steps be taken to improve Dockyard Accounting for repairs, so that it may be a valuable aid to the Admiral Superintendent in the carrying out of his functions. The present delay in the preparation of costs for repairs and refits undertaken at Naval Bases cannot any longer be considered acceptable.

....Nothing

Nothing in the foregoing is to be read as depriving the Commander-in-Chief of his operational, administrative or disciplinary control of the Command.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'E. Johnstone', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

(E. Johnstone)
A/Captain, R.C.N.
Director of Organization.

Ottawa,
18th June, 1943.