

INSTITUTE OF MARINE ENGINEERS  
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President: JOHN CORRY, ESQ.

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REPORT

OF

The Meeting of the Deputation

TO THE

FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY

In reference to the condition of the  
Engineer branch of H.M. Navy,

HELD ON

TUESDAY, JULY 16TH, 1901.

## P R E F A C E .

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58, ROMFORD ROAD,

STRATFORD,

10th August, 1901.

As a result of the various discussions which have been held on the subject of the Condition of the Engineer Branch of the Navy for some time past, and especially of the Paper read by Mr. D. B. MORISON (Vice-President N.E. Coast Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders) and consequent discussions, a Memorandum was drawn up and presented to the Admiralty by a large and representative Deputation on Tuesday, July 16th. The following is the Memorandum and Report of the Meeting.

JAS. ADAMSON,

*Hon. Secretary.*

## Memorandum

submitted to SIR FORTESCUE FLANNERY, M.P., and the Members of the House of Commons constituting the Deputation to the First Lord of the Admiralty, by the North East Coast Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, the Institute of Marine Engineers, and the Bristol Channel Centre of the Institute of Marine Engineers, with reference to the present unsatisfactory condition of the Engineer Branch of H.M. Navy.

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As the result of careful consideration and full discussion of the accompanying papers by Mr. D. B. MORISON, Vice-President of the North East Coast Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders, the above-named Engineering Institutions deem it their duty to record and submit their opinion, that the present constitution and organisation of the Engineer Branch of the Royal Navy does not admit of it efficiently fulfilling its important functions.

The causes of inefficiency may be divided into two classes: (1) Those which create dissatisfaction and deter the enlistment of desirable candidates, and (2) those which relate to the numbers, training and organisation of the engine room complements.

We are of opinion that the primary cause of the unpopularity, inadequacy and consequent inefficiency of the engineering department is its inclusion in the Civil Branch of the Service, whereby the executive authority and status of its Officers are rendered incommensurate with their duties and responsibilities.



We, therefore, recommend that the engineering department be embodied in the Executive Branch of the Service, and that its officers be endowed with executive rank, accompanied however by executive control, restricted to their own department.

The Engineer Branch being a large and important factor in the war efficiency of the Royal Navy, it would appear that it should be adequately represented on the Board of Admiralty.

In view of the technical nature of the issues involved in Courts Martial affecting the engineering *personnel*, such Courts should comprise a proportion of Engineer officers.

The existing system under which Junior Engineer Officers are appointed "in lieu of" Senior Officers, and are thus called upon to undertake the duties and responsibilities properly attaching to the higher rank, without receiving that rank and the corresponding rate of pay, is obviously unjust, and should be suppressed.

The proportion of Engineer Officers of higher rank than Fleet Engineer is at present discouragingly small. We are also of opinion that some attempt should be made to render the Engineer Branch more attractive by a revision of the scales of pay and pension.

In view of the rapid evolution which has taken place during recent years in engineering as applied to Naval purposes, we are strongly of opinion that the whole question of the education and training of the engineering *personnel* should be thoroughly investigated.

The total numbers of the trained *personnel* of the Engineer Branch at present fall so far short of the requirements of the Service, that it is impossible to provide ships in commission with engine-room complements which are adequate in numbers, skill and experience.

Some of the causes above referred to have so far discouraged candidates, that the number of entries into the Engineer Branch through the normal channel has decreased to a dangerous extent, and the Admiralty have had to resort to expedients to make good the deficiency which have lowered the standard of the candidates, and tended to undermine the efficiency of the Branch.

The important duties of the Artificer ratings in modern warships can only be efficiently performed by thoroughly skilled and experienced mechanics, such as the existing conditions of service have failed to attract in the required numbers, we, therefore, submit that increased inducements should be offered in respect of pay and accommodation.

SIGNED,

For the NORTH-EAST COAST INSTITUTION OF  
ENGINEERS AND SHIPBUILDERS,

HENRY WITHY, *President.*

D. B. MORISON, *Vice-President.*

JOHN DUCKETT, *Secretary.*

For the INSTITUTE OF MARINE ENGINEERS,

JOHN CORRY, *President.*

JAMES ADAMSON, *Hon. Secretary.*

For the BRISTOL CHANNEL CENTRE OF THE  
INSTITUTE OF MARINE ENGINEERS,

THOMAS MOREL, *President.*

JOHN GUNN, *Past President.*

THOMAS A. REID, *Member of Committee.*

The Following is the Report of the Meeting at which the Memorandum, and other Papers and Discussions—including that which took place in connection with the Institute of Marine Engineers—were presented:

A DEPUTATION, constituted of Members of the House of Commons and representatives of various Engineering Institutions, met the First Lord of the Admiralty at the offices of the Admiralty, Spring Gardens, London, S.W., on Tuesday, the 16th day of July, 1901, with reference to the present unsatisfactory condition of the Engineer Branch of H.M. Navy, and for the purpose of conferring as to the improvements and alterations which the Deputation deemed necessary.

Amongst the members of Parliament present, were:—Mr. W. Allan, Mr. John G. A. Baird, Mr. John Burns, Sir. John C. R. Colomb, K.C.M.G., Mr. R. Hunter Craig, Colonel J. M. Denny, Mr. Chas. M. Douglas, Sir W. Theodore Doxford, Mr. H. E. Duke, Sir E. Durning-Lawrence, Bart., The Rt. Hon. Sir W. H. Dyke, Bart., Mr. E. B. Fielden, Sir Fortescue Flannery, Sir Christopher Furness, Mr. Ernest Gray, Sir E. Walter Greene, Bart., Sir Alfred Seale Haslam, Sir Joseph Leigh, Mr. John B. Lonsdale, Mr. Reginald Lucas, Mr. J. Majendie, Mr. William Mather, Sir Chas. M. Palmer, Bart., Mr. Frederick Platt-Higgins, Mr. Walter R. Plummer, Colonel Ropner, Sir John A. Willox, Mr. Chas. H. Wilson, and Mr. Gustavus W. Wolff. The following gentlemen also attended the Deputation:—Mr. Henry Withy, President; Mr. D. B. Morison, Vice-President; and Mr. John Duckett, Secretary of the North-East Coast Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders; Mr. John Corry, President, and Mr. Jas. Adamson, Hon. Sec. of the Institute of Marine Engineers; Mr. T. W. Wailes, Vice-President; Mr. Thos. A. Reid, of the Bristol Channel Centre of the Institute of Marine Engineers.



Lord SELBORNE (with whom were Admiral Lord Walter Kerr, Rear Admiral Douglas, Mr. Arnold Forster, Parliamentary Secretary; Rear-Admiral Fawkes, Private Secretary; and Sir John Durston, Engineer-in-Chief of the Royal Navy), in opening the proceedings, said: I am here to-day as a listener. I do not propose to make any statement to you at all, though I may ask some questions; therefore, I hope everything you have to say you will take this opportunity of saying.

Sir FORTESCUE FLANNERY, who introduced the Deputation, said: Lord Selborne—as a preliminary to the questions which have been raised and the speeches which will follow—I may explain, in introducing this large and influential Deputation, that its members are here in sympathy with what they believe to be necessary improvements in the conditions of Naval Engineers, but they are not here for that reason alone. The reason that this Deputation is here is because they believe that improvements in the conditions of Engineers' service are necessary to make the Fleet as thoroughly and as completely equipped as it ought to be. It is fifty years ago since the steam branch of the Navy was established, and the Engineer officers of to-day are of an entirely different class from the workmen, who were, in the first instance, entered to take charge of the engines of His Majesty's ships. Not only are they of a different class, but they have increased enormously, both as regards the Engineers themselves, and the men placed under their immediate charge. That is the case, because, as your lordship is thoroughly well aware, the *personnel* of the Engine-room at present is about one-third of the entire *personnel* of the whole Fleet. Now, my lord, the question which the Deputation would like to put as clearly as may be before your lordship and your colleagues, is whether or not during that fifty years the successive changes which have taken place in the organization of the Engineering department have been such as are required by the improvements of the department and such as make it at the present time as

completely equipped as it ought to be. The Deputation will submit, my lord, that in some respects that development has not been complete. They will suggest to you in the first instance that the number of Engineer officers is too small. (Hear, hear.) And upon that statement, be it right or wrong, I propose to say that the whole gravity of this question turns. We believe it is common knowledge throughout the Fleet that the number of Engineer officers is too small, and that the establishment of Engineer officers which the Admiralty in its wisdom desires shall exist, is not complete. Your lordship is familiar with the fact that there are two methods by which Engineers are entered into the Navy. One is through the Engineering College at Keyham and the students trained there; the other way is by what is known as the "Direct-entry" system, under which Engineers who have been trained in workshops outside the Admiralty service are directly entered from that training to the Navy as Engineers. I venture to remind you that the examinations at Keyham have been lowered, and that recently instead of sixty per cent. as the standard number of marks required to be obtained to justify the engineering students being entered, fifty per cent. has been adopted, but that is only a very trifling statement compared with others, which I shall venture to put before your lordship, in support of the allegation that the Navy is short of Engineers. Last Christmas, my lord, there were 200 vacancies to be filled in the Engineering branch of the Fleet, and there were nine candidates who offered themselves for examination to fill these 200 vacancies. Three entries resulted from the examination of the nine candidates. At Easter there was one candidate, and I congratulate the Commissioners on being able to pass that one candidate into the Fleet, and he was entered without any delay whatever. Then a fortnight ago there was another examination before the Commissioners, and fourteen candidates sat for examination for direct entry; four were passed and accepted, and ten were rejected upon examination. Now, my lord, what became of those ten? That is, I venture to suggest,



one of the most striking illustrations of the case which the Deputation would venture to put before your lordship. Those ten rejected candidates were offered commissions as Engineers for temporary service in the Navy, and I sincerely hope they will improve and become useful and efficient officers. Assuming that the information upon which I am making these statements is accurate, and I believe it to be so, does it not prove—to demonstration—first of all, that an insufficient number of candidates come forward in response to the announcements of vacancies, and even those candidates who are not entirely qualified by examination, however qualified in other respects, are, under pressure of circumstances, accepted in some cases by the Admiralty. Then, my lord, regarding the agencies in Liverpool and in another seaport which have been established by the Admiralty for the purpose of inducing Mercantile Engineers and others to offer themselves for commissions in the Engineering branch, I believe I am correct in saying that these agencies have not been satisfactory in their result. Now, my lord, the reason that I have ventured, perhaps with too much emphasis, though I hope not, to dwell upon this fact as to the comparative dearth of Engineering candidates is that when your lordship's attention is called to the necessity for making a change, you may see that the basis upon which the Deputation rests, and upon which their opinion rests, is the basis of making the Naval Service, as regards the Engineering branch more satisfactory and more attractive to the best men, so that, so far from their being a dearth there may be a plethora of first class Engineers as candidates for the honourable position of Engineer officers in His Majesty's Fleet. I remember before the outbreak of the South African War, there were five candidates for every position which could be given in the Army—five men anxious to serve His Majesty in the position of Executive Combatant Officers. I venture to say that the reason that there is not the same proportion of candidates for vacancies amongst Engineer officers is that the Engineer officer, although called an officer, is not in reality an officer; he is a civil servant, and is not

an executive officer with all the dignity and position attached to the holding His Majesty's commission under those circumstances. (Hear, hear.) I do not want, my lord, to belabour this question too seriously. I venture to call your lordship's attention to a fact that there are two parallels to the present condition of things, and to what the Deputation hope will be the future condition of things. The first parallel is that of the Engineers as they are now called, who were formerly called the sappers and miners in the military service of the Crown. At that time the branch of sappers and miners were most unpopular, and there was great difficulty in recruiting for it. To-day, there is no branch of the Military service which is more popular both in the rank and file and with the commissioned ranks than the Royal Engineers. A separate corps was formed, and they have produced from that branch of the service some of the most eminent officers and some of the best men. In the case of the Marine Light Infantry you have exactly a parallel condition of things to that which the Deputation would suggest for the favourable consideration of the Admiralty. In the case of the Royal Marines you have a separate corps: the officers have proper and sufficient distinguishing titles—colonels, captains, lieutenants, and so on, of the Royal Marines, who have complete control over the discipline of their men, always, of course, under the full authority of the captain and their superior officers, and who have no possibility whatever, of hoping to succeed to the command of the ship. One of the objections to rating Engineers executively has been a statement that the Engineers would have the ambition to command the ship, and would not be fit to do so. My lord, there is no such idea in the minds, either of the Engineers themselves, or in the minds of their friends who are pushing this question. Just as the officer of the Marines in His Majesty's ships would be ineligible for the command of the ship under any ordinary circumstances, so would the Engineer officer be ineligible in a like degree.

Lord SELBORNE: Does not that really point to the



fact that the Royal Engineers do not really form a precedent on all fours.

Sir FORTESCUE FLANNERY: The precedent, so far as the Royal Engineers are concerned, was that a change had taken place by the institution of a separate corps, and that from being an unpopular section of the Service, it had become most popular; that was the parallel. Then I went on to an entirely different corps—the Royal Marines, and I desired to suggest that the status of the Engineer may be practically identical with the status of the Royal Marines, in regard to the control of the Engineer officers over their men, and in regard to the ineligibility of their admission to the command of a ship. My lord, the Engineer officer at the present time suffers under enormous disabilities as regards the control of the men who are under his care. Take one illustration alone: a stoker of to-day is a fighting man; he has not only to work at shovelling on coal, but he has the duty of firing, and of using the cutlass. Does it not seem extraordinary that for the purpose of being taught this drill, he is taken away from the control of the Engineer, who is responsible for his discipline, and put under a man for a time, who may be a subordinate officer of the Executive branch, whose duty is limited to teaching him his drill. My lord, I venture to say that the ordinary stokers and firemen, who represent also one-third of the whole, I venture to think that these men go back from the drill to the control again of the Engineer with very much the same feeling felt towards civilians, and with very much the same ground-work of disrespect towards the authority of the Engineer officer, as arises in the mind of a man who has fighting duties to perform in respect of the man who has no fighting duties whatever.

Lord SELBORNE: What proof have you to bring forward for that very strong statement?

Sir FORTESCUE FLANNERY: My proof is that possibly fifty of the Engineer officers—whom your



lordship will understand I could not name—have conversed with me, and have made that statement to me independently; that they have observed that very fact, and that sort of feeling, not in the minds of all those men under their care, but certainly of a proportion of men under their care. Is there any reason why the Engineer who has been adorned with a sword, should not have the actual duty of learning and teaching the drill, and assist to command the men under his care at the time of their drill, as well as during their engineering duties? I venture to say discipline would be enormously advantaged if that were done.

LORD SELBORNE: Do the Engineer officers know anything about drill?

SIR FORTESCUE FLANNERY: To the best of my opinion they are not drilled. The Engineer officer has a sword, but I think I am right in saying—though, of course, I am open to correction on these points by those who are more familiar than myself with the details—that the Engineer officer is not drilled.

LORD SELBORNE: I do not think you will find that to be the case.

SIR FORTESCUE FLANNERY: In the ordinary course of ships on Service, I believe I am correct in saying that such people as the Engineer Officer, the Chaplain, the Doctor, and the Paymaster, are what are known as “Idlers,” and are not part and parcel of the drill of the ship. If I am wrong, I shall be glad to be corrected, but I believe I am correct in making that statement.

LORD SELBORNE: Which is the more important—that a man should do engineering work, or drilling?

SIR FORTESCUE FLANNERY: I should say for the Engineer that the most important duty would be engineering work, but, my lord, the engineering work

that can be done by his own hands is extremely small, and the utility of the engineer is undoubtedly through discipline. If he has not complete discipline very much within his power, his power is, I submit, limited and his utility is limited. The whole run of what I venture to put before your lordship is, that the more complete the discipline of the engine-room staff under the Engineer—with all proper discipline by the Engineer to those who are superior to him—the more valuable, I venture to think, and the more effective will be the power of the Engineer officers, and indeed all that branch of the Service, if the discipline were improved. Before I sit down I wish to prevent any misunderstanding that there is any desire upon the part of this Deputation to represent the American system. Americans go ahead very fast, and have tried an entire intermixing between the Executive officers and the Engineer officers. They have a theory, which they have carried to the extreme, that an officer ought to be able not only to command, but to take his turn on the bridge and on the engine-room platform. That theory has been a mistake and a failure, as proved in the American navy. No one here who is familiar with the conditions of the Service, has ever recommended anything of the kind. Let the Engineer officer stay in the engine-room, and let the Executive officer, or the Navigating officer stay upon the bridge. Well, my lord, I think I have practically stated all that it is necessary to state, at all events in the first instance. We feel, or rather the Engineers feel—and I know a number of them personally—very grateful for the concessions that have been made, but they feel that the Fleet would be enormously improved, and most of my colleagues will agree with me likewise in this—that the efficiency of the naval service would in no degree be injured, and the discipline would in no degree be reduced, but rather the reverse, if the Engineers were granted that rank and that executive control, and that honourable position as officers in His Majesty's service, which their service and authority alike demand in justice to them, and still more for the well being of the



Fleet, and in order that a proper number of Engineers may be obtained for manning.

LORD SELBORNE: I should like to ask just a few questions to enable me to really comprehend your points which you have brought so ably before me. What were these 200 vacancies for which there were only four candidates?

SIR FORTESCUE FLANNERY: It was understood that if as many as 200 candidates at Christmas last were to apply and found to be eligible, that number would be appointed—that appointments would be made for them. I am not in a position to give your lordship my authority for reasons which I think your lordship will understand. That was the general understanding—that 200 appointments would be made if 200 candidates were found eligible.

LORD SELBORNE: Two hundred appointments.

SIR FORTESCUE FLANNERY: Two hundred entries.

LORD SELBORNE: How was it understood? I do not ask for names, but in what manner was it understood?

SIR FORTESCUE FLANNERY: That was generally understood amongst those who have had to do with the recruiting of Engineers in the various branches.

LORD SELBORNE: Was there any kind of statement put forward by the Admiralty?

SIR FORTESCUE FLANNERY: Not any that I am in a position to put before your lordship.

LORD SELBORNE: Was there any notice issued?

SIR FORTESCUE FLANNERY: Without a comparison of what was voted, and the list, I could not say.



LORD SELBORNE: Referring to another question you raised, do you suggest—did you suggest—in your remarks that at the present moment the discipline in the engine-room and in the stoke-hold is not satisfactory?

SIR FORTESCUE FLANNERY: I suggest that the discipline in the engine-room and the stoke-hold could be enormously improved with greater comfort than in obtaining the existing amount of discipline. I suggest that whilst there is much loyalty amongst the engineers, there is a quiet discontent to a large amount amongst them at the present condition of things, which has a restrictive effect upon the recruiting.

LORD SELBORNE: That is not quite the point. Did I understand you to suggest, in referring to the point of discipline, that the discipline between the officers and men was not satisfactory?

SIR FORTESCUE FLANNERY: I suggest it might be more satisfactory. I do not think there is any want of discipline; discipline is maintained, but it could be maintained very much more satisfactorily by the change suggested.

LORD SELBORNE: You do not suggest there is want of discipline?

SIR FORTESCUE FLANNERY: Oh, no; I do not go so far as that.

LORD SELBORNE: As regards examinations, you said that the standard had been lowered—was that entry into the Navy.

SIR FORTESCUE FLANNERY: Entry into the Navy with a period of five years' study. At examination formerly, sixty per cent. of the total number of marks was required, now the standard is fifty.

LORD SELBORNE: Was not that for the selection of those going to Greenwich?

Sir FORTESCUE FLANNERY: That I cannot say. I am, of course, open to correction in details.

Colonel DENNY, M.P.: Lord Selborne, I have but little to add to the very lucid statement made by Sir Fortescue Flannery, but speak with a little authority having been lately President of the Institute of Marine Engineers, comprising a very large majority of sea-going men; and then perhaps I also speak as a partner in a fairly large engineering firm. I do not propose to enter into any arguments why you do not get the men; it is sufficient that your lordship does not get the men, and will not get them upon the present conditions. Whether the Admiralty desire to get them is another matter, but the conditions offered by the Navy to engineers are not such as to tempt them to come to you in preference to the Mercantile Marine. Their rank is not recognised; they are looked upon tacitly as an inferior class of men, and their status is ignored. The result of all that is, when you come to this country for men you do not get them. I know that recruiting has been established in large towns, but on our own account in our own works our men have been strongly urged to join His Majesty's Navy, but the result of the attempt has been total failure. I think any person with any knowledge of the Admiralty conditions will admit the supply of men for the engine-room is totally inadequate.

Lord SELBORNE: You must not think that because I do not contradict these statements that I admit them.

Colonel DENNY: I do not pretend to put the words into your lordship's mouth, but I think that such a fact as I have stated is so self-evident that it cannot be denied. Take any of His Majesty's cruisers and there is an insufficiency of Engineers, certainly in number and also certainly in standing. If we take any one of the large vessels crossing the Atlantic or any of the other seas, we find that, in proportion, the number of Engineers in His Majesty's ships is exceedingly small.



I would urge upon your lordship to give this Deputation a sympathetic hearing, and to take its petition into your very serious consideration. It is not a matter to play with—the future of His Majesty's Navy. When you find that things are as stated, that we have to lower the standard to get men, and have to adopt the direct entry system and that, even with that, the supply is far from sufficient to what it ought to be in this important department, I think, my lord, it is high time for the Admiralty to see if they cannot in some way take counsel of those, able to confer with them and who represent the Engineers, and give them a sympathetic hearing and a consideration of what really amounts to a very serious danger. (Applause).

Mr. W. ALLAN: My Lord Selborne and Lords of the Admiralty, this is a question with which I can safely say I am acquainted. I can only tell your lordships that, however you may look at the matter, from the letters I have received—many of them from engineer officers, almost from every station in the world, I gather the same complaint and the same tone of dissatisfaction at the condition of things. That is what I find in these letters. It must be borne in mind that candidates and engineers in His Majesty's ships are not the same class of men as they were thirty or forty years ago; it must also be borne in mind that the ships are not the same. It must also be borne in mind that the modern warship is a huge mass of machinery of all kinds. You have all kinds of machinery in these vessels—hydraulic, electric and steam, and every sort of scientific appliance. Then all that machinery is practically under the control, and I would say its destiny is practically in the hands of, the Engineering staff. Your machinery for turning your turrets and your machinery for working your guns, is practically all in the hands of the Engineering staff. Therefore, engineers in your Navy are not the same as they were twenty years ago. What then are we face to face with? We are face to face with the indubitable fact that your ships have not sufficient engineers or stokers;



we are face to face with the fact that the engineers who are present on board-ship are at this present moment very much dissatisfied with the condition of things in which they are placed on board His Majesty's ships. The honourable and gallant Admiral shakes his head, and I have discussed this matter with him many times before, many years ago. But I feel we have been too much used to shaking of heads over engineering questions. That is not the way to settle the problem. To settle the problem in the right way, the thing must be grasped from its bottom upwards. How can we get the men and how shall we treat them. We have come to a time now, Lord Selborne, at the present day, we have come to a period when you cannot place a scientific man in an inferior position. You cannot put him in a subordinate position, you must make him equal to any officer in the ship; you must give him an executive rank according to the period he has served, and according to the ability he has shown; you cannot get out of it; you must give that man control of his men. The men are taken out of his control for a time and are taught drilling and firing, and when they come down into the stoke-hold again, they laugh at the engineers. —Lord Selborne shakes his head,—I have it in writing —particulars of the condition the Engineers are placed in. Many a court martial has taken place for petty insults to an Engineer, but they do not report everything; it would never do, and they do not do it. I want to get out of that difficulty and to make the Navy what it should be. We are all Nationalists and Imperialists in this room, and we all want to see a great, strong, bold, healthy Navy; every officer pulling at one rope. At present, the position of the Engineers is something which ought to be taken in hand and righted; the matter should be remedied, and could be remedied by giving them executive rank, and making them feel it is something of worth, and that it is an honour to be on board one of His Majesty's ships. That would not affect the discipline at all in anything but an advantageous way. The captain would be the captain, but the firemen and stokers would feel that the

Engineer was an officer, and a superior officer over them, and an improved system of discipline would thus be maintained. I am fully satisfied, Lord Selborne, that you will earnestly consider the matter we have brought before you, and I have every confidence in this myself. I may say the same to the Secretary of the Admiralty, and to the other honourable officials of the Admiralty—I have every confidence in them, that they will grapple with subjects and with these matters that tend to weaken the Navy. You cannot get the men; I know the difficulty which has been experienced in this respect. In our own shop we have endeavoured to get lads, when their apprenticeship is out to join the Navy, but they refuse. I would, therefore, say, Lord Selborne, that all this shows that the outline you must take, is this, and I say it with all sincerity, you must give these men executive rank. It will not endanger the position of the ship, but enhance it. Give the men a standing and make them feel that the uniform they wear is one to be wisely worn and honoured, and not degraded. (Applause.)

Sir JOHN COLOMB: Lord Selborne, I have been asked to come here to-day and I have with great pleasure, and will now say a few words regarding the Deputation. You, sir, the other day, very properly remarked in the House of Lords how great were the difficulties with which the Admiralty had to deal at the present time. I have heard much about the inefficiency of certain branches in the Royal Navy, and with regard to the particular question now raised, I regard it as one of the greatest difficulties with which the Admiralty have now to deal. I came here to-day because I think the time has arrived for really facing the difficulty in some definite way—in a more definite way at any rate than has yet been done. There is a good deal of ground to travel over, but I will not occupy your time for more than five or six minutes. Just let me draw your attention to one fact; with regard to the *personnel* of the Navy, and especially with regard to this part of the question—why we have



arrived at the present state of dissatisfaction and difficulty. We have arrived at it, I think, through a long series of administrative compromise between the force of sentiment and of tradition on the one hand, and the force of facts produced by the progress of mechanical science on the other. That I take it is the fact. I remember hearing a distinguished Admiral with flags flying, declare that a naval war could not be carried on with steam; that the "Tea-kettle," as it was called, was useful to overtake an enemy, but the first thing an enemy would do when they came up with it would be to put the fires out. I mention that as showing the force which this tradition and this sentiment, I may call it, had on the administration in past years. Now, sir, in 1858, we had the last enquiry into the *personnel* and organisation of the Navy. No one can read that report without seeing the force tradition had in those days to ignore altogether the facts of mechanical science and its progress; and it is on record that the most important of those on that Committee, Mr. Lindsay, a great shipowner, &c., would not sign the report which ignored steam, and he has left on record a perfect masterpiece of foresight, in protesting against his colleagues having failed to realise the influence that mechanical science and steam had, and must have upon the *personnel* of the Navy. But here tradition, triumphed, and it is on that report that really the organisation of the system is based to-day. I merely mention it as a fact which has got to be considered. Now, sir, what has happened since then? The progress of mechanical science has prevailed, and mast and yards have gone overboard, and to-day the warship is absolutely a mass of machinery in the hands of the Engineers. No changes have taken place in the organisation of the Navy in regard to that particular *personnel* which has so much increased. At that time, in 1858, there were not seven per cent. of the total *personnel* of the Fleet belonging to the Engineering branch, and in 1900, as you know, my lord, it is over twenty-four per cent. If you have examined the returns you will find in every part of that *personnel* there is—in the Engineer-



ing department—an increasing ratio; for instance, if you take 1888 to 1900 you will find the increase in the ratio made in those twelve years was a great deal more than that made in the previous thirty. That is how you have arrived at the present state of things. There has been a great numerical increase, but the particular situation of the *personnel* and their position in relation to the Fleet is exactly the same, precisely the same as was the case in the days of the old Fleet. You have therefore this fact, that the Engineering branch is still regarded as a group of civil units put into warships and has neither obtained organization nor an executive part in the ship's complement complete in itself. That is the position, and I am convinced it is not a satisfactory position with regard to the good of the naval service. It is unsatisfactory I think to this extent—that it really repels more than attracts men from the engineering works of this country. Therefore, sir, I think the time has come for facing this question, not by any revolutionary process, but by such statesmanship as will remedy the difficulties at present raised. I would remind you, sir, that there are a great number of very distinguished Admirals—Sir John Hopkins, Admiral Fitzgerald, Admiral Henderson, and Sir Edward Freemantle, etc., who agree. Sir Edward Freemantle said the other day that the great question 'above all questions'—to use his exact words, was the question of the amalgamation of the Engineer with the executive branch. I cannot go to that extent, and I cannot satisfy myself that the step taken by America has been the right one, but I do certainly think that the time has come for recognising that some such amalgamation must come about, and we have to try and see how that can come about in the easiest manner and in the easiest way in His Majesty's Fleet, and this is the matter to which the earnest attention of the Admiralty is directed. I would submit to the Admiralty for their earnest consideration the fact that the time has now come for instituting an Engineering branch as a Corps of itself—the Royal Naval Engineers—and treating and regarding it as a combatant branch of the Navy, and conferring on it

executive functions and responsibility in itself for the special functions it has to perform, and making it an independent body. Then, I think, by taking that course, you would be rendering due importance to the Engineering branch of the Navy, and be making it more attractive, and preparing the way for those changes which I think mechanical science will certainly force upon you very soon. To delay making these preparations is not advantageous to the interests of His Majesty's Fleet, nor to the Engineering branch of the Service.

LORD SELBORNE: Another question I should like to ask. Do I understand, sir, that from your point of view the most advantageous solution of the question is amalgamation?

SIR J. COLOMB: I think that will come in the future. I differ from Sir Edward Freemantle in that respect, but it might be developed in the future.

LORD SELBORNE: You think eventually it should be amalgamation. I wanted to ask you about that; you think that establishing a separate corps would assist your desire for amalgamation hereafter?

SIR J. COLOMB: I cannot help thinking so. I think it has this advantage—that it certainly gets rid of many of the difficulties which you have in your present position, and organises the particular branch. It is too early to deal with amalgamation, but it is easier to amalgamate between two organised parties than with one organised party, and the other disorganised, consisting of scattered units.

SIR FORTESCUE FLANNERY: There are several other Members present who are prepared to address your lordship, but I am unwilling that an undue advantage should be taken of this occasion. (Hear, hear.) I will ask Mr. Withy, the President of the N. E. Coast Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders.



Mr. HENRY WITHY: I have pleasure in coming here to support this Deputation. I may say, Lord Selborne, that this plan was fully discussed at a meeting of our Institution, and the view there taken was that certain changes were necessary in the organisation of the Navy and in the status of the Engineers. We felt that the position of the Engineers should be made more clear, and we believe that the discipline of the engine-room would be much more easily arrived at by giving Engineer officers executive rank, than of their having any complaint of insubordination, or anything of that sort referred to the executive branch of the naval officers. I am told that the Royal Marines number 18,000, and that the *personnel* of the Engineering branch number 27,000, and I think perhaps that is an argument why the Engineers might be made a separate executive body. I do not consider that there will be, or would be, any friction between Engineer officers and Naval officers, or any more than there is between the Royal Marine officers and the Naval officers. The question of the reserve of men for the Navy is important. I am told that there is a reserve list of Engineers who may be called upon to serve, but I am inclined to think there will be very great difficulty in getting them, and in time of war, I presume they will be all over the country and all over the world. Further, the engineering work on board a line of battle ship is so specialised, that I am afraid the ordinary Engineer of the mercantile marine would hardly be able to take his place on board a line-of-battleship, or be able to attend to any special machine he might be asked to look after. He would not be acquainted with hydraulic or electrical machinery. Another thing which would unfit him for doing duty on a line of battle ship would be that he would probably be unfitted for the discipline, and would find it very irksome, as it would be to the ordinary Mercantile Marine Engineer. The other question which seemed to us of very much importance at our Institution was the training of your Engineers.

Lord SELBORNE: In reference to your remarks, do

you suggest it is quite impossible to have a reserve of Engineers?

MR. HENRY WITHY: I would not like to say it was impossible. I think they should be men trained in the Navy. (Hear, hear). I do not think the ordinary Engineer on board a mercantile vessel qualified to take charge of the delicate machinery on board a man-of-war. (Hear, hear). It would be very difficult. I have a good deal of experience, and find as years pass by, men get more and more specialised. Men are specialised at hydraulic machinery, or at electrical machinery and so forth, and we have fewer all-round men than we had a few years ago. With regard to the training of the young engineers, our Institution felt that the matter required consideration. We had no suggestions to offer, but we feel that the matter is worth the earliest attention of the Admiralty, and if they are able, the Engineering branch of the Service should be made more attractive and more popular, when better men would join. I do not suggest there are not proper men, but there is a difficulty in getting men of the right class; if the Service was made more popular, better men would join, and there would be more enthusiasm to put their whole interests into the work, and do the very best they could. We urge upon your lordship the consideration of our Petition.

MR. JOHN CORRY (President of the Institute of Marine Engineers): My lord, I had not intended speaking on this subject. I have only recently been connected with the Institute, but as a practical ship-owner this is a subject I take great interest in. I know the great importance of having an efficient engine-room staff. In times of peace and war, the Chief Engineer is the most important man on board your ship, because all the machinery of that ship is under his charge, and if he is not a man of power and ability, or does not know how to use his power and ability, so as to impress the *personnel* of his staff, you will not have that efficiency which is absolutely necessary. It has been said, and



said very truly, that the position of machinery has increased enormously. Everything now on board ship is done by machinery, and it requires a very able man, and a very clear-headed man, to be ready and competent at times and under all emergencies, and to make the best of circumstances that may arrive. You must have men of first-class ability, and you must give them that position which their training, their knowledge, and their capacity warrants them in expecting. With regard to economy, we all know how important it is for a ship to be economically managed, and if you have men who do not understand, and cannot understand the engine-room, you have a very inefficient ship, and therefore an expensive ship. With capable Engineers, however, everything works smoothly; the whole staff work harmoniously; but you must have the right class of men, and you must get the right class of men, and to get them you must give them a position, which I think, and believe is, really the thing they require. I think matters have been fully explained already, and that I need say no more. I had not intended to speak, and I trust you will excuse me.

Sir FORTESCUE FLANNERY: There are others who are prepared to speak. I think that now the matter has been fully explained to your lordship, and that probably it will not be necessary for me to call upon anyone else, unless there are any of my honourable colleagues who would wish to speak.

Lord SELBORNE: My time is entirely at your disposal.

Sir FORTESCUE FLANNERY: If there are any of my honourable colleagues who wish to speak, I am sure Lord Selborne will be ready and pleased to hear them. Sir Edward Reed is unable to be present to-day, but writes me a letter, from which I will read an extract. He says:—

“You and the other members of the Deputation

should quite understand, I hope, that my interest in the question of the Royal Naval Engineers is in no way abated, and that I believe the Naval service is running the greatest risk by with-holding from the Engineer officers their rights, and that executive authority of engine-room and stoke-holds, which are as essential to efficiency in time of peace as they will be in times of war."

My lord, I think we have said now all that is necessary or proper, in order to fully lay the matter before you.

Mr. MATHER, M.P.: I would just like to add a word or two, although I have not been invited to do so. I would suggest to the First Lord of the Admiralty this fact, that we have not arrived at any finality in the mechanism required on board. So far as the future is concerned, it is a question of speed which lies at the root of all the organisation, I think, on board ship. The fleetest fleet must necessarily be the commanding fleet of the future, and to achieve that end, of course, mechanism of a more and more perfect character will be required as time goes on. Therefore the importance of the Engineering staff for a man-of-war, and for vessels of war become, and will become, a matter of increasing volume. I venture to think that much of the trouble that has arisen in the Navy of late in connection with the use of the water-tube boilers—if my friend, the honourable Member for Gateshead, will forgive me for introducing the point—I think that much of that trouble might have been avoided had the Engineering staff possessed that executive rank which would have enabled it to utilise the knowledge of its Engineers for the purpose of advising the captain of the ship and others in authority, and responsible for the charge of this branch of the naval equipment; if the staff had had those opportunities, I think much trouble and danger might have been avoided, and many valuable suggestions might have been given from the Engineering staff had they possessed that rank and position which would have enabled them to speak to their superior officers.



Another point I wish to lay before your lordship, is that this Deputation is not pleading for a matter of personal vanity. (Hear, hear.) We are not here to express to you that we have, as Engineers, great responsibilities in our profession, coupled with duties of enormous importance, and that that fact is not sufficiently recognised by the Admiralty. It is not upon that point that the matter turns; we urge that if a proper rank was given to Engineers, and an executive power vested in them, that there would be a largely increased number of men more than at present rush to serve His Majesty's Navy. It should be urged that such a position is a highly honourable employment, and from that point of view the question of rank becomes of some importance certainly. We have been told that gentlemen in this room have not been successful in inducing men in their employ to join the Navy, but this would not be the case were it told them that in joining the Navy they would have an officer's rank given them, which the man could follow up, and improve according to his ability. That would have an enormous effect over the *personnel* we are concerned with, and more and better men would be willing to join, if they felt that in doing so they were rendering an important service and filling a responsible position in joining as an Engineer in His Majesty's Navy. I would therefore urge upon your lordship to look upon this matter from the point of view of the loyal service rendered to the country by the Engineers. They are a profession of men developed by national methods, and a much higher class of men than they were forty years ago. That class of men is certainly required in the Navy in increasing numbers in view of the increasing amount and complexity of the mechanism, and the multiplicity of mechanical operations on board a man-of-war, which are being added to day by day, and will increase more and more. I think that with the changes as suggested there will be increased utility and satisfaction amongst those who have to serve that department.

LORD SELBORNE: There is a misapprehension in

what you said about the Belleville boilers. Engineer officers have had the most ample opportunities, either through the Captain of the ship or through the Engineer-in-Chief of making any observations they chose, and that was done from time to time. (Hear, hear).

Mr. MATHER: They may have the opportunity now, but I am only just pointing out that by introducing this executive power amongst Engineers, you not only give them the opportunity to make suggestions, but it becomes a matter of direct responsibility.

Lord SELBORNE: Every Engineer considers he is responsible for making what suggestions experience suggests; I think he is responsible for that. Gentlemen, I ventured to say when we commenced this very interesting meeting that I was not going to make you any speech, but that I was going to listen, and I shall, with your permission, maintain that line. All that you have said will be most carefully followed and considered by us, though if I do not contradict any of the statements it must not be inferred from that that I admit them. For instance, I must not pass over the suggestion which has been made that the Engineering branch of the Royal Navy does not adequately perform its important functions. I cannot admit that for a single moment; nor do I admit for a single moment that there is any want of discipline in the engine-room or the stoke-hold; I do not think that is really so. I must also at once deny the suggestion that the stoke-hold and engine-room artificers do not show that strict respect which discipline enjoins towards the Engineer officers. Of course, the contention which I think has run through many of the speeches is that the whole Department is undermanned, and that there ought to be a great many more Engineer officers in the Navy. That, of course, is a matter of opinion, though I do not admit the fact. It is also perfectly fair for gentlemen of experience to express an opinion, and to say that we admit as officers into the Navy some gentlemen who do not come up



to the standard. It is, of course, perfectly legitimate to hold and to lay down that opinion, though I do not admit the truth of it. Again, I do not admit that we do not get the numbers that we ask Parliament for, and though we may make our standard easy we get the men up to it, and we get those we ask for according to our standard. The numbers in July were 978, and 963 were obtained, and we expect to make the other 15 up before the close of the year. I only mention that in order to differentiate between what do seem to me to be fair subjects for an expression of opinion, and what represent misrepresentations. There is only one point I wish to refer to, although it has not been alluded to in the speeches that we have heard to-day, but it is included in the Memorandum. That is a suggestion which has been repeatedly made, not only with respect to the Engineering branch of the Navy, but in respect to other branches of the Navy also—that there ought to be a representative of the branch on the Board of the Admiralty. Now, that suggestion is only made out of a complete misunderstanding of what the Board of Admiralty is. The Board has not been, and never will be, a collection of the heads of departments, but consists of the Lord High Admiral, or a number of gentlemen selected by the Crown. The Lord High Admiral you might compare to the Secretary of State for War and the Commander-in-Chief rolled into one; those are his functions and what the Board of Admiralty has always been. When it has not been the Lord High Admiral, it has been a number of gentlemen selected by the Crown, who hold that particular office under commission. It is open to the Crown to change Members of the Board, and to elect Members on the Board. The Comptroller, for instance, has been on and off, and when he is on he may be off again. A civil engineer has been placed on the Board at one time, but he is not there now. I merely point to that to show you that it is a misrepresentation to state, or to assume, that the Board of Admiralty is a collection of heads of departments. It is no more than the Secretary of State for War and the Commander-in-Chief themselves

represent heads of departments. The heads of departments—the head of the Engineers, the head of the Marines, and the head of any other branch of the Service have exactly the same means, and the same power of representing their case, and of putting forward their points to the Board of Admiralty as the Quarter-master General, the Paymaster General, and the Inspector General of the Forces have to the Commander-in-Chief and the Secretary of State for War. Of course, it may be a matter of opinion as to whether or not there should be a collection of heads of departments, but that is another point with which, however, I do not agree. The point I want to put forward is that to have a collection of heads of departments would be to have a complete reversal of the whole of the history of the Admiralty and of its origin. I have nothing more to say to-day, gentlemen, but to thank you for the able and full manner in which you have put your case before me.

Sir FORTESCUE FLANNERY: It now but remains for me on behalf of the Deputation to express our deep gratitude to your Lordship for the attention with which you have listened to every one of our arguments and for the very great courtesy with which you and your colleagues have received us on this occasion.

These remarks were received with applause, and the Deputation withdrew.







