CORRESPONDENCE

WHERE THE HELL'S MY RELIEF?

SIR,

I was delighted to see the publication of Commander R. J. Rolls's article, 'Where the Hell's My Relief?', in the last issue of the Journal. The important and 'pressing' subject of recruiting Engineer Officers normally raises few eyebrows, particularly in the highly specialized world of equipment design and procurement. However, without properly educated and qualified officers we will have nobody left to maintain and operate this equipment, and I feel it is entirely appropriate that this subject should not only be aired in this journal, but that I should take up some space to provide a meaningful reply.

Having correctly identified the way in which targets are derived and the factors militating against successful recruitment, Cdr. Rolls explained the R.N. recruiting organization and outlined methods of entry for Engineer Officers. However I take issue with his view of the future and would crave the indulgence of your columns to indicate what the Royal Navy is doing to

address these problems.

Fully conscious of the problems facing us to the end of the century, the Director of Naval Recruiting (DNR) recently produced a strategy paper which was taken by the Navy Board earlier this year. This paper includes an Action Plan which encompasses a number of initiatives that have been running for some time as well as identifying future activities and making bids for greatly increased resources. While the money will have to await the outcome of LTC 90, we are still able to pursue a number of items in the action plan, of which those pertinent to Engineer Officers are outlined below:

- (a) Engineer Officer Presentation Team. This is an overtly recruiting presentation team aimed at science sixth forms and engineering faculties at University. It starts on the road at the end of September 1989.
- (b) Recruiting Publicity Material. Apart from our glossy recruiting brochures and videos being brought up to date we have started to produce curriculum support material in association with educational publishers—for example 'A' level syllabus material on ship stability is in a pamphlet covered in the R.N. logo. We also feature in a number of career casebooks that litter careers offices in schools and universities, in such areas as engineering, computing and business administration.
- (c) Careers Fairs/Exhibitions. This is a major growth area and we need to be in attendance, in style wherever we can. While we are covering as much as possible, more money will enable us to do even better.
- (d) Work Experience. This is another growth area and one in which we are pushing the Fleet establishments and FMGs to the limit. Initiatives such as CREST, COMPACTs, TRIDENT and PFUE are all being explored for their applicability to the Naval Service.
- (e) Educational Qualifications. The educational environment in which we are recruiting has changed, and we need to ensure that the Navy's needs match the educational attainments of the potential officers. This involves exploring the applicability of HND, AS levels*, double science GCSE and the like.

^{*}Advanced Supplementary examinations, first set in 1989, require only half the study time of an A level but make similar intellectual demands of students. A combination of A level and AS level papers can be taken, giving a broader range of subjects. For a candidate to be considered for entry to the Royal Naval Engineering College he may now have either A levels in maths and physics, as before, or an A level in maths plus two AS levels one of which is in physics.

As I hope readers will gather from the foregoing, the recruiting and training worlds are being pro-active in their approach to the 1990s recruiting scene. However, we are not complacent, and are willing to explore every opportunity of increasing our contact with the raw material. If there are any more good ideas out there, please let me have them—every little bit will help us to find our relief!

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