

THE FUTURE OF THE SPARE PARTS DISTRIBUTION CENTRES

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By the date that this article is published, control of the Spare Parts Distribution Centres will have been transferred from Engineer-in-Chief to Director of Stores. A.F.O. 1767/57 was the first world-wide announcement of this change, and the news was probably received with mixed feelings by the Fleet. It is felt, therefore, that a few words are required on how this change came about and how the new organization should work.

History

The eventual integration of the S.P.D.C.s with Naval Stores had been envisaged for more than ten years, in fact since the Chisholm Report of 1945 which resulted in the setting up of the S.P.D.C.s as we have known them to date. It was not intended that this integration should take place until all machinery equipments and their component parts were fully covered by published catalogues, or Parts Identification Lists, in which each and every part was identified and allocated an Admiralty Catalogue Number analagous to the Naval Store *Rate Book* Pattern Number.

For various reasons, the major one being the reduction in the uniformed personnel of the Navy, it was considered necessary to transfer the staffing and administration of the S.P.D.C.s from E.-in-C. to D. of S. before the cataloguing programme was anywhere near completion. It should perhaps be mentioned here, that both the above Admiralty departments and D.N.C. and D.E.E., who are also closely involved, viewed the transfer with a certain degree of reluctance.

The New Organization of S.P.D.C.s

The Director of Stores is responsible for the overall administration of all S.P.D.C.s at home and abroad. S.P.D.C. (U.K.), at Eaglescliffe, is under the charge of an S.N.S.O. with the title of Superintendent ; S.P.D.C.s at Malta and Singapore and the sub-S.P.D.C., Hongkong come under the general administration of the local (S) N.S.O. with an N.S.O. of appropriate rank as officer-in-charge. The Naval Store staffs at the S.P.D.C.s have assumed responsibility for all custody, stocktaking, accounting and issue of spare parts and the replenishment of stocks as they become depleted. A measure of technical advice is obviously required in connection with these duties : how this is provided is shown in later paragraphs.

Owing to the very nature of the equipments and their component parts which are supported by S.P.D.C. it has been recognized that technical assistance must be afforded to Naval Store staff to deal with the multifarious problems such as identification, etc., resulting from the lack of standardization of machinery in most ships. It is, in fact, this situation which necessitated the S.P.D.C. organization ; if these technical problems did not exist, spare parts could have been dealt with as general naval stores.

Each S.P.D.C., therefore, has a civilian technical section, headed by a naval engineer officer, to provide the necessary ' technical service '. At Eaglescliffe, it is now called the Technical Investigation and Interpretation Section (T.I. and I.). Its size varies from less than half-a-dozen to a few dozen, depending on the volume of work of the individual S.P.D.C. This section has to interpret all spare gear demands where the item required is not positively identifiable by means of an Admiralty Catalogue number or maker's Basic Part number quoted on the demand. Other duties involve such things as checking the identification of parts received, survey of parts returned prior to arranging reclamation, checking the state of preservation and suitability for issue and, particularly at overseas S.P.D.C.s, proffering advice regarding stock ranges and levels to be maintained as a result of their technical knowledge of the ships' equipments and parts concerned. The Engineer Officer of a S.P.D.C. is empowered to correspond direct with ships, establishments and appropriate Admiralty departments on any purely technical matter in connection with the above duties.

The Engineer Officer would welcome visits or correspondence from his ' opposite numbers ' in the Fleet whenever such contacts may assist him in his duties enumerated above.



FIG. 1—S.P.D.C. (U.K.) EAGLESCLIFFE. SPARES RETURNED FROM THE FLEET AWAITING SURVEY

Admiralty design departments continue to be responsible for providing D. of S. with detailed statements of all spare parts which should be stocked to support all new equipments being introduced into service. In addition, these departments also advise D. of S. of forecast changes in spares requirements for equipments already in service resulting from alterations in numbers, As. and As., modifications and changes in repair policy. D. of S. orders all spare parts for S.P.D.C.s ; manufacture will continue to be under the supervision of the appropriate Admiralty Overseers as hitherto.

Cataloguing

As mentioned above, it was the intention to catalogue fully all parts in every equipment supported by S.P.D.C. This very formidable task would have taken many years given all the men and facilities required. With the limited manpower that can be made available it has been necessary to restrict cataloguing work on existing equipments to those which are more important and likely to remain in service for some time, particular attention being given to those which lack an adequate parts identification system. As a result of this it is hoped that there will be enough effort available to catalogue all new equipments to be introduced into service ; the ultimate aim being to catalogue equipment before it goes into service instead of afterwards as is the case at present.

This policy should cause the volume of demands requiring technical interpretation to diminish steadily during the next decade as the uncatalogued equipments gradually go out of service.

E.-in-C.'s cataloguing section is sited at S.P.D.C. (U.K.) Eaglescliffe and is headed by a commander. Now that the emphasis is being placed on cataloguing equipment at an early stage when the details are known only by the headquarters design department and the manufacturer, it would be advantageous to move this section to Bath, but for various reasons this move is unlikely in the foreseeable future. Meanwhile its presence at Eaglescliffe enables it to work 'hand-in-glove' with the T.I. and I. section, mentioned above, with considerable mutual benefit.

Admiralty Machinery Depots

These depots in the U.K., whose functions were fully described in the *Journal of Naval Engineering*, Vol. 8, No. 2, remain under E.-in-C.'s administration with a naval engineer officer in charge.

S.P.D.C.s abroad contain an A.M.D. section as described in the October, 1956, issue of the *Journal*. The general administration of these A.M.D. sections is now carried out by the naval store officer in charge of the S.P.D.C., who also deals with the clerical side of the work. All technical aspects, however, remain the responsibility of the engineer officer for 'technical services' at the S.P.D.C. E.-in-C. keeps the records of all equipment stored therein and, together with D.N.C. and D.E.E. where applicable, controls their issue.

Conclusion

The change in management, which officially took place on 30th September, 1957, was not a sudden affair with all the upheaval which could thereby arise. Naval store staff have gradually been infiltrating into the S.P.D.C. organization since the middle of 1955 when a N.S.O. relieved a commander at Eaglescliffe.

The mixture of naval store and technical staffs now manning the S.P.D.C.s should ensure a higher efficiency than was possible before. All problems concerning the administration of stores, accounting, shipping, etc., are dealt with by



FIG. 2—TWO-TIER RACKING

personnel qualified and experienced in such matters, leaving the technical staff free to concentrate on that part of the work which they alone can do.

It should not be inferred from the above that the many naval officers and ratings who ran the S.P.D.C.s in past years in any way failed in their duty. In fact no one else could have done the job. It is to their credit that their hard work has built up the organization to such a state that it can now be taken over by non-technical personnel.

Tailpiece

As the proportion of complex equipment, the maintenance and repair of which very largely depends on spares from S.P.D.C.s, is steadily increasing, so the range and quantity of spares to be held grows likewise. Eaglescliffe is almost bursting at the seams with spares—although disgruntled E.O.s will complain that too many of their requirements are 'not available'! Naval stores staff have introduced two-tier racking to alleviate this problem (Fig. 2), but additional buildings may soon be inevitable.

Although a certain amount has been heard about standardization of machinery in ships with its benefits from the spare gear point of view, it is evident that the progress to date has made little difference to the steady growth of new items of spare gear.
