# PART OF SHIP DIVISIONS

BY

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It has long been the custom to organize the engineering mechanic ratings for divisions first into Port and Starboard watches, then into Red, White and Blue watches. This worked reasonably well for leave, watchkeeping, and action watch bills, but had one important and serious drawback—it did not enable the divisional officer to get to know his men because, as often as not, he saw them only at Sunday Divisions. What a pity, incidentally, that time does not now permit General Drills and Landing Parties. Even General Quarters, in its new form of damage control, is often only exercised by the engine-room, electrical and shipwright parties, while the rest of the ship goes to stand-easy. Regrettably, it is not uncommon for a divisional officer, when asked his opinion of a rating in his division, to say that he does'nt know much about him as he works for Lieutenant ' So-and-So '.

This article tells of the reorganization which was carried out in a fleet carrier, with the object of having the divisional officer in charge of his divisional ratings while working, so that he could really get to know them. It must be said that the scheme was introduced against scepticism on the part of some officers and initial opposition from the Regulating Chief Engineering Mechanic.

In an aircraft carrier the Engine-Room Department divides fairly naturally, and not too unevenly, into four :—

(*a*) Engine Rooms
(*b*) Boiler Rooms
(*c*) Outside Machinery
(*d*) Flight Deck.

These were accordingly made the new divisions, with the engineer officer of each as the divisional officer. In point of fact, each division had two divisional officers and, in addition, a sub-lieutenant and midshipman. Each division was divided for the Watch Bill into three : Red, White and Blue. For leave, one and a half watches were normally allowed ashore, though changes could easily be made—in bad weather, two could be left on board or, when alongside with no steam, two coloured watches could be allowed ashore. This arrangement may be a bit cumbersome, but it is certainly not more so than the old system, for the difficulties are inherent in the requirement and not the system. One cannot help feeling, though it is irrelevant to say so here, that the complement should allow for four watches for watchkeeping, in order to have a working party of one-quarter of the watchkeepers available in the forenoons at sea, and to avoid the irritating change from main to auxiliary watchkeeping on return to harbour.

All petty officers and leading hands were attached to the engineering mechanics division by part of ship, including auxiliary watchkeepers, but each division had its own Divisional Chief Engineering Mechanic who was also in charge of that part of ship. It was the aim, as far as possible, to exclude the chief engineering mechanics from the Watch Bill. This was introduced to improve the incentive for petty officers to pass for chief, and to provide a worthwhile differential for the chiefs.

It will be realized, and was eventually appreciated by the Regulating Chief, that divisional officers and their chief engineering mechanics could relieve him and the Senior Engineer of a great deal of time-wasting (for them) divisional work. Divisional officers were, incidentally, given the same disciplinary powers as their executive counterparts.

So far this all sounds very nice. What are the snags ? Here are some:—

(*a*) Change of part of ship may mean change of division.

(*b*) What happens when a man does a course ? (auxiliary watchkeeping, etc.).

(*c*) What about the ' Odds '—laundry crew, general mess party, etc.

Readers will, no doubt think of many more and there are many more, but none of them, either individually or collectively, are of sufficient moment to sink an organization which properly deals with the main items of divisional work. Ratings must get a proper training in all aspects of their job and changes of part of ship are inevitable. Divisional changes must therefore be made, but they are very unlikely to occur more frequently than quarterly and the changes themselves should mean a more balanced assessment over a period of a year, because more officers would have had time to gain a proper knowledge of each man.

One officer was designated as Training Officer for all the departmental courses. He was attached to neither of the engineering mechanics divisions but was, in fact, the divisional officer of the engine-room chief and petty officers. At the end of each course he gave the appropriate divisional officer the results of the course, and his own assessment of each man. It was only necessary, therefore, for a rating to change his division if he was given a new job after he had completed a course.

As far as the ' Odds ' were concerned, there could be little change and they must always remain a snag in any system and in any department. The difficulty they present is by no means peculiar to the Engineering Department. The best that can be done is to divide them into watches, use them in the Damage Control Organization and any other suitable drills so that one can get as much opportunity as possible of getting to know them, and not have them in the particular jobs too long.

Before closing and waiting for the criticisms—'It won't work'—'I've done it for years ', etc.—it should be said that the Engineering Department Chief and Petty Officers Division was left as before.

It is believed that the Part of Ship Divisional System could be worked in any ship larger than a destroyer. The fact that one division may basically be larger than another does'nt matter all that much and, after all, that's where the ' Odds ' come in. The great thing is that the divisional officer knows that the men working for him are his division and the engineering mechanic knows that the officer and chief he sees in his part of ship are his—and know him. Furthermore, the Part of Ship Divisional System is the only one which will enable a divisional officer to carry out the duties defined in Q.R. and A.I. Chapter 31, Section 11.