

LET'S HAVE A LOTTERY!

DESPITE our tragic losses, it must be recognised that the Falklands crisis has been an excellent morale booster to the British Forces, and especially to our own boys and girls who served in the South Atlantic.

All of them, including the pre-Falklands redundants, PVRs, and RDPs, are currently on a "high" and share an esprit de corps not seen or experienced in many a long year.

Inevitably, that high will be supplanted by an anti-climax and it is up to all of us to lessen the slide by learning from the lessons of hardship — enhance the operational shortcomings in our training equipment, and simultaneously to better certain aspects of Service life by more imaginative approaches.

NOVEL

One such approach would be to establish our own naval lottery. There are many ideas, but the following proposal is novel, should be easy to administer and be good for the Fleet.

The proposal is based on the existing Voluntary Sports Subscription, but could equally be applied to a naval charity or any other "self-help" scheme which directly benefits serving naval personnel. It greatly increases the amount of money available for sporting activities and gives voluntary subscribers a chance to win substantial monthly prizes. Everyone in the Navy would stand to gain, and we would be putting our money into our own system and not into the local city or town lottery.

BASIC UNIT

If a prize element is an integral part of the VSS, many more might subscribe — and I am assuming that 80 per cent (of 65,000) would enter.

The present direct debit VSS monthly contribution of 20p could be replaced by a direct debit "basic unit" of £1, up to a maximum of £5 a month. Each basic unit would purchase the

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equivalent of two lottery tickets, which would give the subscriber two attempts at winning a monthly draw prize. Gross amount raised per month would be apportioned 50 per cent to monthly prizes, and 50 per cent to the VSS.

If VSS membership was 52,000 (80 per cent of 65,000) and each member bought just one basic unit (although in reality many would buy more), total gross monthly income would be £52,000.

And if 50 per cent of this was apportioned to the VSS, that would be £312,000 per annum.

A series of prizes would range from £15,000 first, with possibly different arrangements at Christmas so that a charity could also be helped.

The system of picking prizes could rest with our friends in Centurion at no great cost. Service numbers could be used (omitting the letter suffix and prefix) by typing into the computer (random selector) a person's Service number twice for each basic unit held. Winning numbers would be published each month.

I wonder what others think of the idea. — G. Dykes, FRCS, HMS Mercury.

• The VSS is still in comparatively early days. Whether it is practicable to operate the kind of scheme suggested, or whether it would receive official approval, is another matter, but it is certainly an interesting approach. — Editor.