

# Personnel

## INTRODUCTION

The Naval Service, including the Royal Marines, the OARNS and the WRNS, is some 72 500 strong — and strong is the right word because they remain men and women of high calibre, both professionally and in their personal qualities. But that is some 2,500 less than we need to run the Navy at its present and forecast level of commitments, and the shortages fall most heavily in a number of areas critical to the manning of the Fleet — principally Seaman and Engineer Lieutenants, Artificers and Mechanicians, and Leading Seamen in the Operations Branch.

The situation has worsened significantly over the last year. Efforts to halt indeed to reverse, the steep decline in numbers following the 1974 Defence Review, have been frustrated by greatly increased premature outflow. The main reasons are not hard to find — a further year of depressed pay, stretch and turbulence because we have been forced to apply reduced manning standards in the Fleet and leave many billets empty ashore. This is the recipe for disaster in a Navy which men not only volunteer to join but which they can now volunteer to leave — as of right, at 18 months notice — a new factor to which we must be sensitive and responsive.

The incoming Government has set about the underlying problems promptly. A new significance is given to the place and role of the Armed Services in society. And they have restored, from 1 April, the full military salary, based on parity with our civilian comparators plus the X factor, as calculated in the 1979 report of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body, and have given a firm undertaking that the proper level will be maintained in future. This involved increases in basic pay averaging 32%: in addition, the major forms of additional pay (such as Submarine Pay) were increased by some 14%. A number of the more pressing improvements necessary to conditions of service, long held back by the application of a rigid incomes policy, are also near to final approval.

The immediate decision to restore pay to its proper level has given a new impetus to our recruiting, retention and retrieval campaign and, although it is still too early to detect firm trends, our hope is that we will now keep many more of our trained personnel and persuade more of those who have left prematurely to rejoin. This is the quickest way to improve the situation in the shorter term whilst increased numbers of recruits go through the long process of reaching the trained strength. But full recovery is bound to be slow as the effects of the

lean years pass through the officer and rating structures. We trust that the old lesson has been relearned, that it is all too easy to run down Service manpower but infinitely more difficult — and expensive — to reverse a decline and restore the confidence and balance we need for the exciting and encouraging opportunities ahead.

## OFFICER MATTERS

Last year we were able to negotiate much better pension arrangements for officers who continue to serve beyond normal retirement ages and extensions are now permitted up to age 60. Officers who have already retired can also apply to re-enter under these provisions. We are now offering more of these extensions to help cope with numerical shortages but there is a limit to the numbers that can be accepted: the shortage is primarily in Lieutenants and not in senior Lieutenant Commanders and above. Moreover there has to be a limit on the number of re-entrants because of the downward shunting effect this causes. In the first four months of the scheme, twenty-two officers over normal retirement age were re-entered from all ranks, lists and specialisations.

## RATING MATTERS

1978/79 was a difficult year for recruiting with a shortfall of more than 21% on our higher target. At the same time outflow rates were very high, caused chiefly by men exercising their option to leave at 18 months notice. We have lost men from the trained strength in greater numbers than we have been able to recruit their untrained replacements.

Towards the end of the year we introduced a new Extended Service Scheme which replaces the old Non-Continuous Service and T100 schemes. Besides the better pension arrangements already mentioned, the main differences are full rates of pay for the NCS men and service of up to 5 year blocks instead of the old 3. The age limit remains at 55. We are about to improve the scheme by offering guaranteed 10 year blocks to certain shortage categories — mainly Artificers and Mechanicians — in some preference draft areas.

We have also taken legal powers to offer extensions of active service in 10 year blocks (3rd Term) as an alternative to 5th and 6th Fives. We are about to offer these to Artificers and Mechanicians and will extend this to other categories as the need arises. And to round things off, we are introducing a third

choice a 10 year extension consisting of 5 years active and 5 years guaranteed extended service. In the past we have discarded too many highly skilled and expensively trained men of 40 years of age. We are taking positive steps to encourage men to come back who have left us in the last 5 years and are in the shortage categories. Each one of these men will be getting a personal letter and details of the new Pay and Allowances. In addition we have made conditions for return to the Navy more attractive than they have ever been, so that as far as possible men may pick up where they left off in terms of status and responsibility.

In the face of a critical shortage of Nuclear Propulsion Senior Watchkeepers a bounty scheme was announced on the 15 January 1979 with the aim of improving retention of these vital senior ratings. In exchange for a guarantee of a further 3 years service they (nearly all of them Artificers and Mechanicians) can claim a taxable bounty of £3,000. The scheme was introduced to improve manning levels and thus the balance of sea and shore service which had become seriously distorted. It also recognises the long periods of unremitting vigilance at sea and in harbour required of these men. The bounty scheme is a temporary device while longer term measures are taken to build up numbers and so provide a margin to allow NPSWs to have a break from watchkeeping duty.

### ENGINEERING BRANCH DEVELOPMENT

The first of September 1979 is an important milestone for the Engineering Branch. It is the date on which some ten thousand ratings change their title. 2,600 of these are transferring voluntarily from Weapon Engineering to Marine Engineering, taking with them essential electrical expertise. At the same time the existing separate Ordnance, Control and Radio categories in the WE sub-branch will adopt the uniform titles of Weapon Engineering Artificers/Mechanicians, Mechanics because of the increasing need for an overall systems approach to the task of maintaining weapon effectiveness. Details of these changes are shown in the diagrams of the current "Rating Structure" later in this BROADSHEET.

By 1983 the ME Sub-Branch will have assumed responsibility for the generation and distribution of high power and for electrical control of propulsion and auxiliary machinery in all ships and submarines. It seems certain that whatever the future holds, so far as changes of technology are concerned, the adoption of a system concept of responsibility which is the central theme of these Engineering Branch Development changes, will stand the Royal Navy in good stead.

### WOMEN'S ROYAL NAVAL SERVICE

Progress continues to be made in the process of integration. A First Officer WRNS is now the First Lieutenant of a major RN shore establishment and junior WRNS officers will shortly join the Junior Supply Officers' Professional Course for the first time, thus enabling a much greater interchange of jobs ashore between RN and WRNS officers in the Supply Branch. All junior WRNS officers will in future undertake a short Administration Course at

HMS PEMBROKE to prepare them for the wide variety of appointments they are expected to undertake.

A WRNS Mechanician category is being introduced in the Fleet Air Arm and it is planned to hold the first course in July. In the officer structure, the recruitment of WRNS Air Traffic Control Officers has recently been instituted.

On the international front a WRNS support contingent has recently deployed with 41 Commando Royal Marines to Cyprus for a 6 month tour, and a WRNS officer will shortly join Operation Drake in New Guinea as the team's administration officer for a period of five months.

Overall, the last year has seen a period both of consolidation within the WRNS as the implications of the continuing process of integration have become apparent, and of planning to ensure that the WRNS continues to provide the best support service to the Royal Navy.



The First Lieutenant of HMS Mercury (First Officer Rosemary Ball, WRNS) with Fleet Chief Petty Officer Dykes, the DOW.