

MANPOWER PLANNING

During the last 8 years the Navy's manpower has reduced from 74,500 to 65,000. Much of this has been achieved by reducing shore support and training – SLIMTRAIN. Over the period the sea/shore ratio has changed from 40/60 to 51/49 and the teeth/tail ratio from 60/40 to 70/30.

The need to reduce manpower and to increase productivity is axiomatic. Through this improvement in efficiency we have been successful in reducing the pay bill and have thereby increased the Navy's ability to invest in front line capability. The trick now is to carry this efficiency enhancement forward into the future and here the introduction of new ships and submarines with lower complements will help to continue reducing the manpower requirement, for example the Type 23 as described on the previous page.

An aspect of reducing manpower which is constantly monitored is the extent to which, by increasing people's output, we come to expect too much of them and hence undermine the delicate balance of naval life. The current levels of notice giving by ratings and requests for premature voluntary retirement by officers are higher than they have been for some time. The reasons for this are complex – and affect all the Services – but a major cause is the buoyancy of the economy and the job market. Too high an outflow is, of course, undesirable because of the impact on operational effectiveness and the difficulties and expense of having to recruit and train replacements.

However the Open Engagement, which allows ratings 22 years service from the age of 18, has led to a beneficial increase in the average rating length of service and it has now been extended to the QARNNS, WRNS and Royal Marines. The Second Open Engagement, which gives 10 years further employment, is well established and the numbers accepted each year have increased to just under a thousand in 1988.

RECRUITMENT

In an expanding UK economy all major employers face heightened competition for recruits. This difficulty increases when there is a steady reduction in the supply of suitably qualified young people, which is currently the case in most Northern Hemisphere countries. Like other employers, the Navy will be facing this challenge into the foreseeable future.

Nevertheless, overall entry figures for the past year have not been too discouraging. For officers we achieved 93% of our target, with the main shortage areas being Engineers, Doctors and Instructors. For ratings the corresponding figure was 91%, with main areas of shortage amongst Artificer Apprentices, Marine Engineering Mechanics, Radio Operators, Communications and Medical Technicians, Stewards and trained Nurses. Recruiting of RM other Ranks and WRNS remained buoyant.

Previous Broadsheets have highlighted the challenges ahead. Measures to counter these include more flexible entry criteria, identifying better career prospects for women and improved opportunities to gain civilian qualifications. We are also placing greater emphasis on marketing the Navy, including an increase in 'Meet the Navy' ship visits and more work experience opportunities at Training Establishments.

All serving and retired officers can help the marketing process – by describing the experience of a Service career and, more specifically, by "talent spotting" on behalf of our Recruiters. DNR is much encouraged by the considerable help he already receives; it undoubtedly plays a vital part in helping to meet our recruiting targets.

RETENTION

Retention of our people is a current top priority for Second Sea Lord's Department and for the Services generally. Although our wastage continues to be low by civilian standards, the rates are increasing and it remains vitally important to arrest this trend.

Many separate measures are being adopted. One line of advance will be to improve job satisfaction in the Navy, in particular by removing from the sailor the less rewarding aspects of shipborne life – for example by contracting out some ship cleaning and painting tasks. We also seek to improve the quality of life by enhancing the facilities available.

A detailed Continuous Attitude Survey has been introduced to aid policy evaluation and to monitor the changing attitudes of our people. This will complement the vital work being done on the optimum levels of retention by rank/rate and specialisation, including the cost of wastage, and will provide crucial data to assist optimum allocation of resources.

There is now an acute awareness of the vital importance of retention at all levels and in all areas of the Service. The Navy Board is very much alert to this problem area and has charged a Retention Strategy Working Party with developing a package of measures aimed at encouraging greater continuity of service.

FROM THE CHAPLAIN OF THE FLEET

What do a former mounted policeman and an Observer have in common? They have both become Naval Chaplains! Whilst the overall numbers of the Chaplaincy Service remain at 89 for all three denominations, recruitment of Anglicans continues to be difficult and our intake reflects a current trend in the Church of England for Ordinations to be at a later age than was customary, and often as a second career. Thanks to a new initiative sponsored by DNR, a recruiting Seminar is now held annually at RNEC Manadon from which, this year, four Chaplains eventually joined on Short Service Commissions. In the longer term, the inclusion of the Royal Navy in Theological College placements for student pastoral training will hopefully produce further recruits.

For members of the Church of England this year has seen the beginnings of our entry into the Synodical procedures which bring us into line with the Church as a whole and which eventually will mean a greater involvement by the laity in the government and administration of the church in the Royal Navy: all members of the Church of England are encouraged to enter the Electoral Roll of their Chaplaincy. The Royal Naval Lay Readers Society has taken the initiative to become more involved and this led to their first residential weekend held at Ampert House on the theme of the Ministry of the Laity.

In 1989 at long last the foundation stone of the new Roman Catholic Church of St. Peter and St. Paul in Rosyth was laid, and work on the building proceeds.

The Church of Scotland has long been noted for the support it gives to Service Chaplains. As part of that support it has set aside one day during the General Assembly when Chaplains of all three Services are invited to attend, in uniform, to be presented to the Assembly. Besides receiving a report from the Convenor of the Chaplain's Committee, the Assembly occasionally invites a Senior Officer to address them. This year it was Vice Admiral Sir Jock Slater, who took the opportunity to stress the importance to the Services of the work of their Chaplains, and the rich tradition of loyal service which Scots people have given to the Royal Navy.

Finally, congratulations to my predecessor Noel Jones on becoming the Bishop of Sodor and Man: the Navy's first 'English' Bishopric.