

MANPOWER PLANNING

The announcement on the way ahead under Options for Change and LTC 91 signalled a significant reduction in the planned number of personnel required by the Naval Service over the next decade from about 63,000 to 55,000. In total, the decrease amounts to some 8000 billets both at sea and in shore support areas, and such a large change will require careful management if the opportunity to restore balance is not to be missed

MANNING

Manning, for many years, has been characterised by an almost constant picture of under-bearing against requirement where dilution, stretch and gapping have been common place. This is changing, and manning in recent months has entered a new

phase with the prospect of equilibrium. Discounting the last remaining requirements for Operation GRANBY, the shortfall of officers has reduced to around 2% and there are favourable signs on the recruiting front as more recruits come forward. Rating manning is also rapidly moving towards balance, although, as with the officer corps, the global scene masks particular difficulties in a number of specific sub-categories where underbearings are forecast to remain. The Royal Marines are forecast to remain under-borne in the short term but a balance should be reached early in 1993.

However, despite this healthier prognosis we must not relax the fight against excessive wastage which is not only costly but also seriously debilitates the manpower resource.

The first edition of NAVY LIFE, an annual benefits orientated magazine, was published just before last Christmas. Reaction has been favourable and the Editorial Team is already compiling the next edition. The team has been further heartened by the news that the magazine has won an award from the International Association of Business Communicators.

RETENTION

Retention has shown a marked improvement in recent months with applications for premature voluntary release from both officers and ratings well down on previous levels. Requests to withdraw notice to leave the Service are up as well as a growing interest from former personnel to re-enter the Service. These improvements are in no small part due to significant advances in basic pay and enhancements to some categories of specialist pay and bonuses. The introduction of officer bonuses for mid seniority GL Lieutenants has been well received; the review and enhancement to Longer Service at Sea Bonus increments and the up grading of other categories of specialist pay have all contributed to improved retention. The Gulf War has also played a part and the tightening of civilian employment opportunities has certainly not worked against retention efforts.

RECRUITMENT

Officer Recruiting. Statistically 1990/91 results were very similar to those for 1989/90. Enquiries were down by 11.9%, applications up by 7.3% and we failed to meet our targets by 11.6% compared with 7.6% the previous year. Royal Marines and aircrew targets were achieved comfortably with good quality entrants. There has been an encouraging number of female enquirers of high quality, many interested in the Seaman Branch. Two areas of concern are the lack of young people applying for Full Career Commissions and the decreasing knowledge of the Royal Navy among our target population.

Rating Recruiting. Rating recruiting was generally satisfactory in 1990/91 against the highest recruiting targets since 1980/81 and the overall shortfall of 9.3% in RN recruiting compared favourably with figures for the previous year.

Royal Marines recruiting after a good start tailed off at the end of 1990 and DNR experienced difficulty in meeting the target in the final term. Applications for the Corps generally fell by 6% compared with last year. In line with RN male applications, there has been a rise of 10% in adult applications but this is countered by a significant fall of 25% in junior applications.

WRNS recruiting has been buoyant, with a 42% increase in entrants compared to last year.

There has been a 78% increase in applications to re-enter the Service.

Recruiting targets for 1991/92 have been reduced as a result of Options for Change. DNR is fairly confident that the encouraging results of 1990/91 can be repeated and probably improved given the current economic climate outside.

Short Service Engagement with 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines and the JHQ. Within 4 days 1 officer and 79 other ranks had deployed with the Brigade, and 5 officers had joined the JHQ.

MEDALS

A small but nevertheless important part of personnel work covers the broad spectrum of medals. At the start of the Gulf operation a 90 year old former Petty Officer wrote to the First Sea Lord offering his services and enclosing his Service documents, which dated from 1928. First Sea Lord noticed that he had not been awarded the LS and GC medal. Subsequent checks revealed that although not eligible for the regular medal he was entitled to the RFR LS and GC medals. On 30 May this year First Sea Lord presented the medal to Mr W H P CUTTING aboard HMS LONDON during the ship's visit to the Pool of London. First Sea Lord has presented many medals, but it is the first time he has presented one with the King's head on it.

WRNS TO SEA

Since the announcement, in February 1990 that WRNS personnel were to serve at sea, there have been fundamental changes in their Terms of Service and employment. All WRNS officers and ratings currently serving have been given the opportunity to volunteer for sea service but from 1 September 1990 all women have joined the WRNS with a liability for sea service and all new entry and professional training has been integrated. The X factor differential between male and female pay was abolished in April 1991 and all WRNS Officers and ratings now receive the same rates of pay as their RN counterparts.

RESERVES

During GRANBY 395 volunteer members of the RFR and 19 RNR personnel were mobilised in support of the Royal Navy. Reservists were employed in shortage areas including communications, medical support, engineering and public affairs. Without exception they made an invaluable contribution and 61 transferred to the Open Engagement with a large proportion electing to remain through to demobilisation in early July.

RMR strength is approaching 1100, of whom 60% have earned their green berets. During the recent Operation HAVEN in Turkey and northern Iraq over 100 reservists volunteered to serve on a shortened (3 months) Special

WRNS officers now join as X, E, S or I on the General or Supplementary Lists and follow the same training and career pattern as their male counterparts. In December 1990 WRNS Officers adopted equivalent RN rank titles. WRNS ratings now undergo exactly the same training as their male counterparts and are being recruited into almost all RN branches. The exceptions are submarine and small ship branches but only because of the difficulties in providing reasonable privacy for both men and women in the accommodation areas. A study will commence in January 1992 concerning WRNS in submarines. Since April 1991 the SD career path has been open to suitably qualified WRNS ratings.

In January 1991 Minister (Armed Forces) [redacted] announced that WRNS personnel would be eligible for flying duties. Initially they will be employed as Pilots, Observers and Aircrewmen in Sea King Anti-Submarine Warfare and Airborne Early Warning helicopters and Lynx Anti-Surface Warfare and Anti-Submarine Warfare helicopters. Employment in the Sea Harrier and in Commando Helicopters will follow at a later stage.

Many ships now have a mixed male and female crew and others are being adapted in due course. Although formal policy evaluation is some way off, early indications of success are encouraging, despite a few problems. The initial hurdles in amalgamating new entry and professional training have been overcome and the mixed courses are now working well.

CHAPLAINS AT SEA

The Gulf Crisis and the War which followed it provided Chaplains with both a challenge and an opportunity. We had to show that we could provide a full service with all billets filled and replacements nominated. Given our multi-denominational character, we also had to give the Navy a full spread of denominational cover. Our opportunity was to demonstrate what Chaplains have to offer in time of uncertainty and war. During the crisis, while peace remained a possibility, prayers for peace were offered daily at noon in all Chaplaincies.

Chaplains at home worked in concert with RNR Chaplains, Missions to Seamen Chaplains and parish clergy throughout Great Britain to set up a comprehensive network to keep families in touch. They also took their place in casualty action cells. The response from the civilian church was truly magnificent. Offers of help were received from Bishops and clergy throughout the country and a number of clergy volunteered for active service if required.

In the theatre of war a Chaplain was stationed in RFA ARGUS and three other chaplains, one from each denomination served in the Force. They were all greatly heartened to find themselves enabled, at every level, to give the service for which they were trained.

The Gull Service attended by HM The Queen, leading members of the Government and the Armed Services was held in Glasgow Cathedral on Saturday 4 May 1991. The Archbishop of Canterbury, the RC Archbishop of Glasgow and the Moderator of the General Assembly all participated and the Sermon was given by the Archbishop of York. It was a service which encompassed the feelings of the military, the bereaved and the nation, incorporating both an act of remembrance and intercession for all involved, and an act of reflection which focused on the hopes for the future not only in the Gull but throughout the world. It was at this point, somewhat poignantly, that children of the Christian, Moslem and Jewish faiths participated.