

26 Jun 72

THE FLEET CHIEF PETTY OFFICER

Reference: A. DCI 923/70
B. FTM 46/72

1. Since some 13 months have elapsed since the introduction of the Fleet Chief Petty Officer/Warrant Officer, I feel that some sort of Feedback from the Fleet is necessary; either by official representation, or by the media of the Board Bulletin.
2. Whilst I am fully aware that the Captain has kindly said he would arrange a meeting with the Fleet Chief Petty Officers in order to have an informal "Talk In", I make no apologies for making the following observations and comments.
3. It was quite right and proper for the MOD not to lay down hard and fast rules and terms of reference, until they had some working knowledge of the new rank, however, it is precisely this working knowledge that will come from experiences gained in the Fleet. Surely then, it is up to us to start the 'change by evolution' and not by 'revolution' and I suggest that it is high time we got the 'evolution' underway.
4. Firstly, I think that we must consider three items:-
 - a. General comments on the situation, problems and difficulties, as they exist today.
 - b. Comments and suggestions as to how we see things shaping in the future (and our recommendations to meet this end).
 - c. The role played by the Fleet Chief Petty Officer in BULWARK today, his status and his privileges.

Although the first two are long term problems, we would be guilty of narrow mindedness and far too insular in thought, if we were to discuss the BULWARK problem in isolation. Important though today's problems in BULWARK are, we must not lose sight of the wider horizons and the broader implications that will affect the Fleet in the years to come.

5. The Background: After some initial 'hiccups' the use of 'Sir' and 'Mr' in the correct manner is improving. However, there is still an alarming number of people who do not know of the existence of Fleet Chief Petty Officers. This is particularly noticeable in the Royal Dockyards, where neither Dockyard workmen, D of E, or Telephone Exchange operators have any idea what a 'Mr' is. Furthermore, we are still virtually unknown to the other two Services.

Officer is retained in his present ship or establishment on promotion. They are simply 'turned on' as Sirs and Misters one day, and back in the field the next. It would of course cause some drafting and appointing problems, but I feel that this problem must be tackled soon, even if it means delaying a mans' promotion, causes some turbulence with drafting and delays in promotion. The man must go out into the field of middle management as a brand new 'Mr' in his ship or establishment

6. Uniform: Various comments have already been made and I shall just reiterate the major points that most Fleet Chief Petty Officers are in accord with. My own view is that we still look like Chief Petty Officers. Whilst it is appreciated that there is to be no return to the old Warrant Officer uniform (Reference A), we must surely prepare ourselves for the day when the term 'Warrant Officer' replaces that of 'Fleet Chief Petty Officer'. In order to accomplish this I should like to see:-

- a. An eight button jacket
- b. Cuff buttons taken off
- c. The Royal Coat of Arms worn on both sleeves (as do Warrant Officers in the RAF)

In addition to the above, the following improvements are suggested. The insignia of the Fleet Chief Petty Officer when dressed in Action Working Dress (No.8's) or in 2N's or 2B's, is not distinctive enough.

DCI 459/71 stated that the small metal Royal Coat of Arms (Vocab No.35017) would be worn "in the same manner and with the same dress as for CPO's and PO's" That is on the tie in 2N and 2B dress and on the collar of No.8 or No.10 dress. Because of the small size of this particular badge (similar to the CPO and PO collar/tie badge in size) it is impossible to identify a FCPO at 20 paces, and, in particular, when not wearing a cap.

The proposal is that the Royal Coat of Arms be worn on the shoulder with 2B, 2N, 8's and No.10's:-

- a. Using the metal badges on the shoulder of 2B, 2N and No.10's.
- b. Using the blue printed shoulder badges (Vocab No.25826) with No.8's

These proposals will clearly require FCPO's to have the officers' style white and No.8 shirts in order to make use of the shoulder straps. The immediate advantages of using shoulder markings is that the FCPO/Warrant Officer is instantly recognised at distances, or when in enclosed (office) working rig, dressed in 2B or 2N without headgear, because:-

- a. Officers are still easily identified by their gold woven shoulder straps
 - b. CPO's and PO's are easily identified by their metal badges on their tie or collars.
- Therefore,
- c. FCPO's/Warrant Officers will be easily identified as the only rank who wear shoulder devices other than the officers' gold woven straps

Finally, one has only to look at the Warrant Officer I of the Army, or the Warrant Officer of the RAF to see how far we lag behind. It is most disheartening to see their officer styled No.1 uniform, its excellent quality of material and design and compare it to ours; the Senior Service, who can do no better than produce a "bodge up" of the existing uniform! One would think that we are still suffering the constraints of wartime utility uniforms.

7. Titles: The sooner we replace the term 'Fleet Chief Petty Officer' with that of 'Warrant Officer', the better. Once again, lack of information precludes any idea of when this may happen. As I understand it, the reshaping of the new Armed Forces Act, when passed through parliament, was also to have a parallel in that HM the Queen was to announce the 'giving of the Warrant' to the Royal Navy. This, I recall, was to happen 'sometime in 1972'.

I am distressed at seeing numerous official documents which lump together the titles "Fleet Chief Petty Officer/Chief Petty Officer/Petty Officer". As also I am concerned about the common collective term "Senior Rates". Everyone has witnessed the gradual erosion of the status and privileges of Chief Petty Officers over that of the Petty Officer over the past few years. This is partly due to the continued use of the term Chief Petty Officers and Petty Officers which lead to an almost identical criteria for setting up perks and privileges.

We must surely aim to set the scene NOW and produce the fourth dimension in print, on documentation and in verbal orders. That is, Officers, Warrant Officers, Senior Rates and Junior Rates.

8. Status and Privileges: Whilst appreciating the difficulties in extending privileges to Fleet Chief Petty Officers/Warrant Officers without adversely affecting those of Chief Petty Officers, there must be some serious thought given towards extending privileges to FCPOs/Warrant Officers in order to widen the gap between them and CPOs. Suggested improvements in this area are contained in the Annex.

It should also be noted that the progress of the FCPO is closely watched by the CPO, since they that also aspire to become FCPOs/Warrant Officers will naturally take a keen interest to see what attractions the new rank holds. Furthermore, should there be no significant increase in the job satisfaction, status and privileges of FCPOs, then we are simply going to lower the status of the ordinary CPO by squeezing in the rank of 'Super Chief' - and this must not be allowed to happen.

9. Job Definition: The introduction of the new rank brought its own problems as to the tasks and extra responsibilities that would be undertaken. It is clearly undesirable to build a job around the FCPO/Warrant Officer, but he has to fit in somewhere. Once this evolution takes place, his status will be enhanced and can be measured by the amount of extra responsibility he undertakes. Furthermore, this improved status brings its own reward in terms of 'job satisfaction'.

The problem however, stems from the fact the FCPO/Warrant Officer is neither a Commissioned Officer nor a Chief Petty Officer, and yet, by the very nature of his job he often carries out the functions of both.

This precarious situation will no doubt be resolved as soon as the functions and terms of reference are clearly defined. I have no doubt that in due course the FCPO/Warrant Officer will fulfill a worthwhile role in the Fleet as the senior and expert of the Middle Management class and will become an established member of society in exactly the same way as his counterpart, the WO1 in the Army and the Warrant Officer in the RAF.

10. Ceremonial/Military Command: We are all now familiar with the sight of a Master-at-Arms attending ceremonial divisions and carrying his sword. This custom was introduced, quite rightly, in order to show his unique position of lawful command. However, now that we are in an era of FCPOs and soon, Warrant Officers, who will have Military Command over all other Chief Petty Officers, would it not be prudent to enhance the status of the Warrant Officers by allowing them the option of having a similar sword at divisions, particularly as they may be officers in charge of platoons or fallen in alongside the unattached officers?

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PRIVILEGES OF FCPOs

1. Duties: The biggest single privilege (in fact, the ONLY worthwhile privilege we have) currently enjoyed is that we do not do 'duties'. It may seem a paradox that on the one hand we are trying to give the Fleet Chief Petty Officer/Warrant Officer a decent role in life, and yet we say 'no duties'. The fact is, all privileges of this type must be seen to be happening. Furthermore, we are now at the top of our particular triangle of life, the pinnacle of our careers. Is it right therefore to allocate certain 'mundane and onerous' duties to us, that were normally carried out by junior officers, surely these onerous duties are all part and parcel of the junior officers 'background training'. I can see the 'no duty' privilege as being the one important feature in a sparse field of privileges. It is certainly at the moment guarded most jealously. The extra duties that I personally feel are most welcome are the ones which give us a much broader outlook in the Service, something that is worthwhile and essential. eg. being used as Assistants in the role of Customs Liaison, Navy Days, Public Relations, Port visit Liaison etc. We have already utilised this system and I see no reason why it cannot be extended to that of assistants onboard. Additionally, we have in the past enjoyed the work when part of a team of auditors or during a Quarterly CB muster. What then, one may ask, do we do with all the (SD) and other officers who already fill this 'assistant' role? Do we finish up with a top heavy Management Structure? It may well take time before we do get it right. In the last few years we have gone through some drastic changes with the Donaldson Committee and the resultant changes in young ratings varying option engagements, plus the reshaping of the GL and SL officers and the probable changes in (SD) structure and promotion - amongst all this, we are trying to fit the fourth dimension - the Warrant Officer:

2. Messing and Accommodation: Our own mess would seem highly desirable. Accommodation is no problem in BULMARK at present. Most FCPOs have a 3 bunk cabin. I envisage our own mess, entirely separate from the CPOs. This includes separate lounge, heads and bathroom facilities. It would also include our own messmen. Here we would be able to discuss the affairs of State and/or entertain HOD's, DMOD's and other VIP's and we should certainly be given our own bar and stock

3. General Administrative Documentation: In addition to our mess, I should like to see the President of our mess take over all our Leave Record Cards, general leave documentation and Leave requirements. All such leave documentation would thus be dealt with by the president for all of us, rather than the present system where we deal with the Regulating Office, exactly the same as the rest of the ship's company. It is ironical that a Leading Regulator or the RPO, signs my Leave Pass to say that I can go on leave!

4. Desirable but not Essential:

- FCPO should not appear ~~on~~ ~~appear~~ on general muster lists (eg. Sick Bay requirements etc.). All such requirements should be dealt with directly between the sponsor and the FCPO's Mess President.
- FCPO's should be given, as far as possible, separate times for general administrative requirements (Pay Office, Clothing Store etc.)
- When in use, could FCPO's use the Officers' Brow?
- Authority to make private telephone calls from dockyard exchanges. This telephone account could also be kept by our President of our own mess. (At present we have to ask an officer to 'borrow' his mess number)