HAIRCUTS

The haircut occupies a position of greater significance than the non-soldier could possibly imagine. When a servicemen puts on his civilian clothes and goes out for a night his haircut is the badge of his job.

Up until about 1965 the ruling in Queen's Rules and Regulations was : "The hair of the head will be short". This means that the hair which showed below the hat was close cropped so that the scalp was visible through it. This notorious haircut was a blocking factor to recruiting figures and so the wording was amended to : "The hair of the head will be kept neat and tidy". A Giles cartoon of the time showed long-haired men in uniform and posters of a "mod" army. All publicity since has given the impression of a new and much changed army in all matters of discipline, and especially haircuts.

What Has Actually Happened.

The phrase "neat and tidy" is obviously ambiguous. The people who enforce such rules are the Warrant Officers and senior NCOs in the unit, and all too often their interpretation of the phrase is the same as it was for "short". Here as elsewhere the situation is far worse in the teeth arm, and at its worst in the old, high-discipline units such as the Guards. Here again the length of one's hair will depend on rank. The officers in a regiment are answerable to the CO and, in such matters, the Adjutant. Such people often take a more natural view and wear their hair as dictated by the fashion of their class—the right-wing upper middle class (Heath and Powell don't wear sideburns !) The RSM, to satisfy the CO if nothing else, must demand a higher standard of discipline than the CO. This is also the case for CSMs, and in turn the Companies' Sergeants. This means that the private is forced to have much shorter hair than anyone else. It is also a matter of how many people one takes orders from. The junior officer who has to answer to two or three seniors has his hair cut to suit the most strict of these. The private who has to answer to forty to fifty superiors (who are by their position more discipline-minded) must again have his hair cut to the shortest length demanded.

Discipline in such matters is administered through the "parade". At Company or Troop level the men are formed up in three ranks, stood to attention and inspected by the Officer, Warrant Officer or Sergeant. Each man in turn is looked at as an article, told his boots or beret aren't clean enough, his buttons aren't done up or he needs a haircut. This ritual is performed each morning ; if a soldier is picked up for the same thing two mornings in succession he is in trouble.

IN THE FIELD.

When a unit (again, mainly teeth arm) takes to the field it is either an "exercise" or a field camp.

The exercise is a practice for war. Here the technical proficiency of operating the equipment (tanks, guns, radar, etc.,) is of paramount importance. Additional conditions, such as the posting of sentries, the forbidding of lights showing from vehicles and the camouflage of vehicles are also simulated. Exercises can be at any level, e.g. Troop, Company, Regimental, Brigade, Divisional or Corps.

The Field Camp is the tent equivalent to barracks: it is the base situated on the ranges or training area from which a unit will go out and do exercises over a period of several weeks.

Since there is no such thing as a 'typical' exercise, there is no need to give a detailed account of any particular one. All the information given below is however a typical selection of experiences which are all true to our own knowlege. There is evidence to suggest that conditions are generally at their worst overseas.

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"All O.R.s are issued with a sleeping bag and a groundsheet. Sometimes we use our groundsheets to make tents, or else we just sleep under trees or in the trucks.
We try to find the driest place, wherever that is. Officers are issued with a camp bed and usually manage to use their rank to get the best place to have their tents put up. Some of the senior officers have vehicles converted into 'caravans' with proper mattresses, bedside locker, wash basin and electric lights. These vehicles are usually trailers which should be towed behind Land Rovers or three-ton wagons. They are supposed to carry stores, not officers. When one officer takes up so much space, someone else has to go short; this is always the man at the bottom."

"On exercises, separate toilets are set up for officers and O.R.s. They are usually wooden boxes with a hole in the top surrounded by a hessian screen. On one particular exercise a sentry-box sort of construction made of hardboard, with a hinged door and a comfortable seat was carefully erected in the position. The whole thing was painted with camouflage paint and bore the sign: BRIGADE COMMANDER ONLY."

"Even on an exercise we have to clean the whole place up when a senior officer is expected to come down on an inspection. They almost stop the exercise to give us the time to have a good shave, clean our boots and shine our brasses. We are even made to go round and pick up all the paper and wash down the vehicles. If a General or someone important is expected to arrive three or four days after an exercise has started, clean uniforms may be brought out so that everyone looks smart. The 'show' then continues at its normal pace so that the General gets the impression that no special preparation has been made for his arrival."

In the field camp the mess system operates just as it does in the barracks. Marquees are set up for the Officers' and Sergeants' Messes. Officers sleep one or two to a tent; O.R.s sleep six to a tent of the same size. In the Officers' Mess carpets are placed on the ground, there are armchairs, tables spread with white linen sheets and the Mess silver is very much in evidence. The tables are properly laid and the waiters dress in white shirts and 'best dress' trousers. The bar stocks an extensive range of wines and spirits. In such places some officers exist, comparatively speaking, in luxury. They may well have a proper steel-framed bed, complete with freshly laundered white sheets and pillow-cases. These beds are made daily by the batman, who also bring their masters hot water in the mornings, clean all his kit — a very messy job, this, in bad weather — and generally act as a butler or valet-come-domestic servant. It is no exaggeration to say that many officers are awakened in the morning with a cup of tea.

While such extravagances are lavished on the few, the masses are in a very different position. They queue in the rain for a mess-tin full of stew and two slices of bread. The officers may be eating trout, which, admittedly they pay for themselves (but any attempt for the men to do this would be squashed on the ground that the cooks could not possibly cope with the extra work). When the men have received their own plain fare they will most likely have to stand to eat it; in good weather, of course, they could sit on the ground. In the evening they may be able to buy beer from the cookhouse, but there would be no comfortable place in which to drink it, and no choice would be offered. Arrangements for sleeping would comprise one tent between six men, and a sleeping bag and a groundsheet each. Some of the more experienced soldiers may have brought their own camp beds, but they are always a minority. Conditions in wet and cold weather can often only be compared with the Somme or Verdun; the men squelching around in water and mud two to six inches deep. The officers' mess and tents would most likely be on raised ground, to ensure good drainage. Needless to say, those of the men are always the most badly-drained and many soldiers have suffered the unenviable experience of being 'washed out' during the night. You may ask why all the men do not bring their own steel beds and extra equipment. The official reply is always that there are never adequate facilities for transporting such unnecessary items for the men.

The ordinary soldier rarely complains of his own poor conditions as he accepts that a fighting force must be prepared to 'rough it'. But they despise their officers for providing such comforts for themselves. And in conditions like these soldiers resent being pulled up by an officer for having dirty boots.

In situations of this nature the officers often have little or no power over their men in circumstances where they cannot hold one particular individual as responsible. The following is an interesting example of this:

> "We were out on exercise and were having it pretty rough. The weather was terrible: continuous heavy rain and wind, and there was a lot of mud and puddles around. We had been out for over a week, and everyone was fed up. We'd been working all hours with very little sleep, and tempers were beginning to fray. Anyway, it was just about the last straw when, one night, about eleven o'clock the C.C. came round to the beer tent, after everyone had had a few pints, and started giving out jobs to be done by morning; something had to be inspected at seven o'clock, and some J.N.C.O.s had to see that it was all done. He ordered the bar to be shut and the men to get on with their jobs, or get to bed. After he had gone

back to the officers' mess, there were jeers and curses from the men. Some of them were rather drunk by this time. It soon became obvious that no-one was moving, and the situation was obviously potentially dangerous. The C.C. could not let it rest there, so he sent for one of the senior N.C.O.s to calm the place down. This was done, tactfully, by a well-respected and esteemed soldier. I am sure there would have been a near-mutiny if any person other than this particular one had handled the situation. If an officer had attempted it, there really would have been trouble."

It can be seen, in cases where the officers have no direct control over the men, that they rely on the hold they have over the junior ranks, and use these soldiers' influence to maintain discipline. When pushed, the men at the bottom will only follow and co-operate with those they respect.

THE WORD "SIR"

A private soldier is known and called only by his name, e.g. "Smith" or "Jones". Between the ranks of Lance Corporal and Staff Sergeant the name of a person is prefixed with his rank, e.g. "Sergeant Jones", "Corporal Smith", or else his rank is used alone, e.g. "Sergeant", "Staff". Both juniors and superiors use these terms. Officers from the rank of Warrant Officer II upwards are addressed by their juniors as "Sir", e.g. a Major will be "Sir" to a Captain, a Second Lieutenant will be "Sir" to a Warrant Officer I. All officers are saluted at all times.

An Officer will address a Warrant Officer as "Sergeant Major". On the other hand, a senior officer will address junior officers by their Christian names—"John", "Frank" etc. In other words, while in the world of the Other Ranks juniors must stand to attention for seniors, the officers are "all chaps together".

The system leads to a ridiculous situation where men of forty, with a wealth of experience, have to stand to attention for boys half their age and call them "Sir". This is supposed to be essential to discipline. In fact it has nothing to do with real discipline or military efficiency but is just a legacy of the forelock-touching days when the aristocracy ruled all. There is no sound argument against the word "Sir" being done away with and being replaced by a system of addressing both superiors and juniors by rank, e.g. "Colonel", "Lieutenant", "Sergeant". Discipline is in any case at present maintained (on behalf of the Officers) entirely by the efforts of Corporals and Sergeants with no such high title.

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DRESS

The difference between officers and O.R.s is emphasised in every possible way, one of which is dress.
The normal working dress of the soldier is "coveralls" (overalls) but this is an article of clothing which is hardly ever worn by officers. In the garments which are more or less the same in style there are always marked differences. The khaki uniform most commonly known is an example: the officers have a slightly better quality material; the trousers are more tapered and made to measure; brown shoes are worn instead of black, the jacket pockets are cut in a slightly different way; the buttons are bigger, and a "Sam Brown" belt is worn. The hat is also a different and more pleasing shape.

In the field, when wearing combat suit, the cap badge of the o.r. is metal and stuck in the beret, whereas that of the officer is embroidered in gold thread, like a blazer badge. They also often wear wellington boots as opposed to normal army issue boots. They carry pistols (a weapon useless to man or beast), when o.r.s carry an S.L.R. (rifle) or S.M.G. (machine gun).

A strict order of dress is laid down for all O.R.s and anyone who deviated from it would be punished, (e.g. a 'tee' shirt showing beneath an army open-necked shirt). On the other hand the most outlandish forms of dress by officers is seen to be 'madly gay' and a sign of 'character' (e.g. carrying a riding crop instead of a cane, and wearing a cape.)

This separatism from the o.r.s goes hand in hand with the caste solidarity of the officers. In civilian clothes an officer is always instantly recognisable. They are the only people who wear trilbies without overcoats. They can always be identified by their cavalry twill trousers, sports jackets, checked shirts and usually, some form of club tie. If you see a group of officers in civilian clothes they will all be wearing the same type of dress, be it sports jacket, suit, or camel coat. About a year ago there was a photograph of a group of ten to twelve young men in black suits, white shirts, bowler hats and carrying umbrellas. The hats were all raised to the same level, height and angle, with the right hand. The occasion was the trooping of the colour and the young men were all off-duty Guards Officers. A group of officers might all have Peugeot 404 cars, or Golden Labrador dogs.

* * *

"BULL" AND MISMANAGEMENT.

"Bull" is the result of mismanagement. As we have already stated, both are at their worst in the teeth arm, since support arm units are often engaged in performing their normal function.
In terms of basic economics, the factors of production are plant, capital and labour. In the normal teeth arm unit the amount of labour is fixed at a level suitable for performing its war-time role. In the normal day-to-day running of a unit, therefore, a lack of plant and capital is made up for by a mass application of labour. Mismanagement and inefficiency are the results of the most expendable commodity being man-power.

For example, the sweeping of roads, barrack squares, vehicle parks and garages is always done — overseas at any rate — by men with brushes. The average company-strength unit will employ about two hundred man-hours each week on this, whereas if machinery were introduced one man could do a better job on his own in less than 40 hours per week. It is mismanagement that wastes this time, but it is the "bull" of the R.S.M. that insists on such a ridiculously high standard of 'cleanliness'.

* *

The average unit will have approximately the following number of men on 24 hour duty at any one time (i.e. all through the night).

DUTY	RANK	No. OF MEN
Field Officer	Captain or Major	1
Orderly Officer	2nd. Lieutenant	1
Orderly Sergeant		1
Guard	J.N.C.O.s	2
	Privates	6
Fire Picket	J.N.C.O.	1
	Privates	6
Drivers	Privates	2
Recovery	J.N.C.O.	1
	Private	2
Cook	J.N.C.O.or Private	1
Orderly N.C.O.	J.N.C.O. (1 per Company)	4-5
Telephonist	Private (1 per Company)	4-5
H.Q.Clerk	J.N.C.O. or Private	1
NAAFI canteen Orderly	J.N.C.O.	1
Medical Orderly	J.N.C.O. or Private	1
Ambulance Driver	Private	1
Orderly Officer	Sergeant or Lieutenant (1 per Company)	4-5
Barman (Officers' Sergeants & J.N.C.O.s' Messes	Private or J.N.C.O. (until midnight)	3
Petrol Pump Attendant	J.N.C.O. or Private.	1
	TOTAL	44-47

24 Hour duties may or may not include the normal working day; e.g. they could be from 08.00 hrs. on a week-day to 08.00 hrs. the following day, or from 13.00 hrs. on a Saturday to 13.00 hrs. on Sunday. For many of these duties there is no sleep to be had until they are finished. Should one be fortunate enough to get some sleep, it will hardly ever be more than four hours at the outside.

Many of these duties could be dispensed with altogether as they serve no practical purpose (e.g. Orderly Officer, N.C.O., telephonist, one driver and a cook: 12-15 men.).

Also, if the Guard were not dressed up in their best kit but wore combat suit (as in some units they do), men could be saved by the combination of the duties of fire picket, N.A.A.F.I. canteen orderly and petrol pump attendant (= 8 men).

Why are such cuts not initiated? Because the men are paid by the 24-hour day, cannot complain about the conditions of their work, and are therefore in abundant supply to be used generously.

The amount of work invoved in these duties also varies; from the mild irritation of having to say where you can be contacted (for officers) to the exasperating necessity of remaining fully dressed, awake and alert (for J.N.C.O.s and privates).

The requirements of "bull" to reach a high standard often results in the extravagant use of materials (usually illegally) by the men to save their time (which no-one else considers important).

For example: when the vehicles were of the old green paint type it was always the practice to clean them with a mixture of petrol and oil. This gave the appearance of a very clean vehicle; it was quick; it was bull. An average of two gallons per vehicle was used and each truck was cleaned in this way between 15 - 20 times a year. This, at current market prices, works out at about £10 per vehicle per year. Taken on the vast scale of the army, this must have totalled many thousands of pounds.

Most teeth arm units are now converted to the new camouflage paint. This has not stopped the mad waste. The crazy ideas of the 'bullshitters' still demand immaculately clean vehicles, and as the new paint cannot be cleaned with petrol and oil the answer is to touch up the spray each time. This is equally expensive in wasted paint.

The annual Admin. inspection has already been mentioned with regard to the waste of paint but here is just one more example:

> "In our unit all the floors in the corridors and stores were painted with red lead. This was a total area about equal to that of a football pitch. The occasion was a pre-Admin. inspection by the C.O. This, however, was two weeks before the Admin. day, and in the course of the following two weeks about three quarters of this area had to be re-painted; reason — bull."

If one considers paint to be a preservative, then there was no need to paint at all. Had the C.O. said that he did not expect to see floors painted for his inspection then they need only have been done once. It is not that it is laid down anywhere that floors MUST be painted. What sets the ball rolling is that Company Commander (A) decides to have his floors painted to be one up. Therefore C.C.s (B), (C), and (D) do the same to keep pace. From that time on it is the accepted thing that floors should be painted. Usually the idea came to C.C. (A) because Troop Commander (X) saw one of his sergeants doing it to his stores, and therefore his whole troop had to do it.

The pattern is clear. Bull escalates from the bottom and is then assumed to be the norm from the top. One soldier summed up the process as follows:

> "On every Admin. I have done we have bulled to the same level as the previous year, plus something new."

This pattern will continue until some officer has the courage to say "No more."

All this senseless work takes time, and, due to bad management, some units work from 7.0 a.m. to 8.0 p.m. for a month before Admin. In addition to this the single men must prepare their rooms for the inspection, which often means working into the small hours of the morning.

The posters say "You're never doing the same thing twice in the Army", or "Something different every day". This is true. Owing to the fact that nothing is being produced there is no sense of direction in the teeth arm. There are so many duties and fatigues to provide; various departments 'phone up and demand something that draws on the manpower resource of a troop (R.S.M. wants two men to escort a prisoner, B.S.M. wants an extra man on sweeping roads, an officer wants a driver to take him somewhere, 10 men per troop for Padre's Hour, a vehicle to go to workshops, C.C. thinks certain vehicles are dirty, send a man to the sergeants' mess to wash dishes, get some bodies together to cut the grass, that man needs a haircut, send him to get one at once, one man to bat for Lt. X , the toilets need to be cleaned again, etc.). The officers and W.O.s walk around in their best uniforms demanding all these things straight away. They tell the sergeants, who in turn tell the J.N.C.O.s to make sure that the jobs are done. They in turn tell the privates to do one job one minute and another the next. The private gets fed up with being messed about and takes very little interest in anything among the pile of half finished tasks. He lives for his beer at night and the next leave.

THE SOLDIER'S CHARTER

1. We demand the absolute right for all servicemen to form soldiers' committees and to join a trade union.

2. It is at Company level (or equivalent) that the soldiers' committees should be set up in the first instance. Each committee would then represent a hundred or more men, with the Chairmen of the different committees forming a higher committee at Regimental level. Company (or equivalent) elections should take place, say, every six months. There should be one man, one vote, with all officials subject to immediate right of re-call, and with at least the Chairmen of each committee being "full-time"—i.e. freed from other duties.

3. One of the most bitter complaints of soldiers is that the "fatigue" system can be abused (and often is) by officers wishing to discriminate against individuals. It is "official" army policy that dirty jobs (cleaning latrines etc) should be spread out evenly. To ensure that this is done, each Commanding Officer must, in our view, be required to keep a book that records every fatigue that each man is doing. The soldiers' committee to have daily access to this book to ensure fair play. People who think they are being victimized may take their grievance to the committee. The soldiers' committee should also ensure that the book is made up ahead of schedule : for example, we would like it to see that all duties in excess of normal working hours are written in with a minimum of twenty-four hours notice, with at least one week's notice for any duty in excess of twenty-four hours duration (e.g. an order to take a vehicle to a distant town or camp) and a month's notice where a duty involves being sent away for more than a week (e.g. a long exercise or course).

4. The Soldiers' Committee should have access at any time to the Company Commander who must give a decision on an issue within 24 hours. If that decision should prove unacceptable to the Committee, then the case may be taken up by the Regimental Soldiers' Committee, which would have immediate right of access to the Commanding Officer. If he does nothing, or his decision is not accepted, then the Soldiers' Union nationally may take up the matter and sanction a work-to-rule until satisfaction is obtained.

5. "Military crimes" are "crimes" that would not be considered such in civilian life—e g insubordination, failure to salute an officer, disobedience, threatening a superior or "conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline". The greatest number of these are dealt with by the Company Commander or Commanding Officer (i e Courts Martial are rare) ; the object is not to establish justice but to maintain and enforce discipline. Perhaps this explains why we have never known such a case, once brought by a soldier's superior to the C C or C O, dismissed. The first aim of the CC or CO is to "back up" the person bringing the charge. There is no way to ensure justice, in our view, other than by allowing a Soldiers' Committee representative to be present at Company Commanders' or Commanding Officers' Orders. This representative could advise the accused after the charge had been read and before the "award" (in civilian language, "sentence") had been given. If the Soldiers' Committee felt the accused to have been victimised, it would decide on action to be taken in the usual way.

Where an offender is Court Martialled (until such time as a Labour Government can abolish this procedure altogether) the President of the Court Martial should confine his duties to those of "Judge" as understood in a civilian Court. There should be a Jury made up of a cross-section of servicemen. This would bring Courts Martial more closely into line with civilian Courts, abolishing the present situation in which the President of the Court Martial (usually a Major in a District Court Martial and a Brigadier in a General Court Martial) performs the functions of both "Judge" and "Foreman of Jury". The accused should have the right to declare a Jury "biased" if he thought a disproportionate number of officers comprised it. Any complaints of this or any other sort would be taken up by the Soldiers' Committee, which would have a representative and advisor present throughout.

The Soldiers' Committees and the Union should negotiate a full review of the Manual of Military Law, and abolish vaguely-worded "crimes" such as "conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline" etc.

6. Complaints by Officers about subordinates' hairlength are in some cases a form of victimisation and an unnecessary source of friction. There should be negotiated an agreed haircut and hairlength standard, and an illustrated booklet, made up of photographs of appropriate hairstyles, should be published as a guide. Once haircut standards had been set at a sensible level, it would be up to the Soldiers' Committees to be the guardians of this agreement. An enormous amount of unnecessary friction on a petty issue could in this way be avoided. The regulation that "the hair on the head shall be kept neat and tidy" should mean just that, and not mean "short" unless this were the will of the soldiers themselves.

7. The Mess System must be abolished. There should be one dining room for both Officers and Other Ranks, and no segregation of sleeping quarters. There should be a communal social centre with public and saloon bars open to both Officers and Other Ranks alike. The Soldiers' Committees should have a say in the management of this social centre. Advantages would be (a) the abolition or at least reduction of class-discrimination and (b) vast savings in expenditure on quite unnecessary "luxury" Officers' facilities.

8. A Soldier is entitled to some privacy in his living quarters. Every soldier should have the right which at present only married soldiers have—i e the right to a "home", a room which is his own personal concern, in which he may receive visitors, including those of the opposite sex, and where his furniture, shelves, drawers etc., are exempt from "bull" inspections by officers. Nobody inspects the Officers' quarters, and this "privilege" should be the right of all soldiers.

9. There must be no interference with leisure hours (e g starting exercises on Sunday mornings), or, if a day is lost unavoidably, a free day in lieu must be given later in the week. There must be an end to compulsory attendance at sporting and social functions (Officers' parties etc). The soldiers' committees would have to act as watchdogs on all these things.

10. Officers' batman facilities should be abolished. If an Officer wants a batman, let him hire a civilian at his own expense instead of being provided a man at the tax-payer's expense. A soldier wants to be a soldier, not an Officer's personal servant whether full-time or part-time. The abolition of all personal servants paid for by the tax-payer would allow soldiers to refuse to bring morning cups of tea to their Officers, scrub their floors etc.

11. The overall job of the Soldiers' Committees should be to guard against any victimization or over-zealous enforcement of ambiguous rules. The Committees should act as watch-dogs over the Warrant Officers. They should, with assistance from the union nationally, negotiate set and reasonable standards of cleanliness, neatness etc for all military equipment, including vehicles, garages, outside areas, barrack rooms, accommodation, stores and personal uniforms. Once reasonable standards had been agreed, the role of the Soldiers' Committees would of course be to ensure that they were not overstepped or "bulled" by over-zealous N C O's. Probably, it would be not only the average soldier's, but also many a tax-payer's opinion that "bulling" is largely if not wholly a waste of man-power and money. We have made some advances already in the last few years : cases of painting grass green outside the Guardroom, or white-washing piles of coal, are now rare. But enormous savings in man-power and money are still to be made.

12. The enforcement of all these reforms would be impossible through mere Parliamentary legislation, unless backed up by organization on "the shop floor" as well. In fact, the impetus for change will have to come from below—both in the army itself, and through trade union action from "outside".

The first right to establish must be the right to organize. We demand the right of all soldiers to join or form a trade union eligible for affiliation to the Trades Union Congress. This in itself would be a small gain unless the union were democratically-runand had real power : the Soldiers' Committees should be the basis o the union on "the shop floor". The Committees and the Union should have access to all files except those governed by the Official Secrets Acts (which should themselves be abolished by a Labour Government as soon as possible). In addition, servicemen should be free to join political parties, with the right of free assembly, freedom of speech (the right to send letters to the press etc) and freedom to publish and circulate journals, leaflets etc within the army. There should be vote by post for all ranks whether in the U K or abroad, effectively carried out.

* * *

(See overleaf for the experiences of one soldier in trying to vote for the Labour Party in the last General Election...)

"About a year before the General Election of 1970, a note was put on Orders about proxy voting. This was to the effect that forms could be obtained from the company office to enable men to appoint a proxy. I immediately went to the company office to secure one, but was told they had none. I went there three times over the following weeks and each time was given the same answer. Eventually, after pestering RHQ office I was able to get one for myself, but they didn't have any forms for wives. This was early December and according to the date printed on the form I had only a matter of days to get it in to my home constituency. This I did and got a proxy appointed, but was too late to register my wife.

The whole matter lapsed in my mind until it became obvious that the Election was imminent. I then started to talk with people with the object of getting them to vote Labour. Labour supporters they were to a man, but most of them (about 19 out of 20) had not registered for a proxy, many were not aware whether or not they were on the electoral register, and most of those bwtween 18 and 21 did not know they were allowed to vote.

Throughout the election campaign nothing was officially said about it by the army authorities, not even that there was to be one. Cut off from Britain, their only contact was the newspapers. Only one copy of each of the three main manifestoes was sent to the regiment, and these went straight to the officers' mess. I myself tried to get hold of them through the unit Library (which says it can get any publication) but they could not get them.

In the period since the election I have talked with many people and have not met one soldier below the rank of sergeant that had, or would have, voted Conservative. I also found that over half the officers I talked with had voted, and voted Conservative (not one had voted Labour, but one who had a proxy abstained as a nil vote). Of the W.O.s and sergeants, about 1 in 7-8 had voted. Of those that did so the majority had voted Conservative, but of the ones that didn't a significant majority had been Labour supporters (mainly sergeants).

It is, therefore, my opinion that of the servicemen stationed outside the U.K. more voted Tory than Labour. Had there been a 100% forces vote I should estimate it at about 12 to 1 in favour of Labour.

It is my opinion that the senior officers of the army had made a similar appreciation of the situation as I have laid out above. On this they had not only avoided helping their men by not publicising the election sufficiently, but tried to hamper their chances of getting a proxy appointed by not providing the forms. I have already said that over half of the officers had voted. It is therefore obvious that they were able to get hold of sufficient forms. They have used their position to political ends.

It is also interesting to note that the By-elections since have received considerably more publicity than the whole of the General Election, and that they even gave the address to write to for those who lived there but didn't know if they were on the electoral register! Both these seats are safe Tory and therefore the officer caste had nothing to lose by showing themselves to be "terribly democratic".
Trades-unionism and the right to free speech and assembly is the only way that such a misuse of power can be avoided in the forces."